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No. MCCCLXXXVI. APRIL 1931. VOL. CCXXIX.

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HOW NOT TO DO IT.—II.

THERE appeared recently in these pages certain records of youthful follies which I drew from the pages of a musty old journal and entitled, 'How not to do it.'

I inquired within again, choosing a slightly later period, and I again struck a vein. This is not so auriferous as the first, for indeed it is marred by some faint outcroppings of discretion. But since the event ended once again in failure, and nearly ended in something worse, and since the cause was ignorance of consequences or a disregard for them, I shall again head these lines 'How not to do it.'

Wine, friends, letters—the older the better. Do I dare add to the trio—journals? Well, perhaps, if kept as ingenuously as mine, and if read as Toleratives after a score or more of years. Some of my younger relatives are at times almost more than I can bear. I have but to refer to these old pages to realise that I, too, was once unbearable. I can scarcely credit it, but there it is—my own record in my own writing. The result is—one less heavy father or fossilised uncle in the world. No one has heard of a heavy mother, and aunts can at worst be Victorian, so I can only recommend my tolerative to the male sex.

I open the brass-bound tome. One of the marginal notes with which its pages abound arrests my eye. At the time of making these notes I was unaware of the word scholiast, or that I was one myself. The lines that I now write are all elaborations of these scholia, and here is the first scholium—"Hill dines."

Hill was young and very gentle. He was called the Gentle Incline. Well, my friend and other self, Jones, and I asked Hill to dine; and he came. Jones and I were in a manner of speaking our

guest's sponsors. For he wanted sponsoring, being a young gentleman of vague outline, both physically and temperamentally. He must have been, for although he probably had a face of sorts, and a body and a voice, I can recall none of them even dimly. He has, in fact, done a gentle fade-out, but he has probably continued living gently on and will die at about a hundred, encouraging the reputation that he was once rather a thruster, a bit of a lad, one of the boys. Well, he was not. If he chances to see these lines and to recognise himself as hero of the only adventure I feel he can ever have had, he will, of course, adduce them as a proof that he once went the pace. Do not believe him. He wanted sponsoring, and Jones and I seem to have failed in our sponsorship. For towards midnight young Hill, who had been witnessing other hardened topers do it with ease, insisted that he, too, should drink a whisky-and-soda, standing on his head. We, Jones and I, said at once, "Hill, you are too young and much too gentle for these brutish follies. We really beg you not to." Later it appeared that he had thought we had said British follies. Anyway, he would not listen. In a moment he was assisted on to his head, and his wavering heels carefully shepherded into their proper and well-marked place on the wall in the corner of the billiard-room reserved for these sad doings. Willing hands placed the tumbler on the floor within his reach. Then Hill, supported now by one arm and his neck, reached for it and applied it to his lips: but as fast as he sucked the contents noisily into his mouth, so fast did they gush forth from his nostrils. Then suddenly his neck gave, and young Hill fell into the tumbler.

I cannot think that he could have been quite—shall we call it—normal? Totally normal necks do not give way like that. Yet he appeared to us, his sponsors, not to have looked too often on the wine when it moved itself aright, nor tarried too long at it, nor to have gone to seek it mixed. Yet there it was! Sorrows, wounds without a cause, babblings—just as old Solomon says, and he must have spoken from experience.

Well, when we had wiped up the floor and Hill's face, and picked some of the glass off one and a little out of the other, Jones and I took him home. On the way he was sorrowful, he babbled. At times he was, for one so gentle, contentious. At the end, after we had tucked him in, he turned a little maudlin, kept calling us his preservers and saying, "God bless you both, old sons of guns."

"This will be a warning to you, my lad," I said to Jones as we left him.

"You may have observed," replied Jones, "that through it all he was quite the gentle-

man. I have never noticed that about you when in a similar state."

Next day we summoned young Hill to attend us, and he found two Dutch uncles of the heaviest type awaiting him. We had intended our main theme to have been the bad form of saying Yes when you have had enough. The fact that young Hill had called us sons of guns was merely a sort of sub-heading. But Hill chose to consider this the head and front of his offending, and especially towards Jones whom he admired greatly—I could never see why, nor could Jones, though he really loved it. However, we could not start the sermon all over again. So we said we both felt confident that it would never happen again, and Hill—perverse to the end—replied that he would never call us that again. It was then and in order to make the *amende honorable* that he started on his elephant. He said—

"I know it's rather cheek my advising two experienced sportsmen like you—but if I were you, I should take an elephant."

Jones and I were to start in a few days' time on our second attempt on the larger mammals of India. We replied rather haughtily that we thought it was more sporting to shoot dangerous things on foot and had made this our practice, the truth being that we had made one rather unsuccessful attempt on foot, and that we could not afford elephants. But Hill replied that he thought he could get us one.

"Not you," said Jones.

Hill said he believed he could. That he had a native friend who had a native friend, who had an elephant, who was under immense obligations to his uncle by marriage, who would be happy to lend him to any friend of his for . . .

"Kindly parse that sentence before proceeding," we asked.

But Hill had never done any parsing. Instead he began again, and tied up the friend's friend, the uncle, the elephant, himself and ourselves, in knots of possessive and other pronouns, and then cut them all by saying, "But you see my meaning."

In the end we learnt that at A., which was a considerable town in the district where we were going to shoot, there was an elephant to be had for the asking, through Hill's good offices.

Jones said—

"Don't elephants want a lot to eat?"

Hill replied—

"Oh, only trees and things—cost you nothing."

"All right," said Jones. "You may get him for us. He'll come in handy for carrying our tigers and things after we've bumped 'em off on foot. Now run along and fix up things with the friendly one."

Next day Hill reported that he had been to his native friend, who had written to his native friend, and that we

might look on the elephant as ours from a certain date, previously indicated by us.

All the above being in amplification of the scholium of two words, "Hill dines," I think your true scholiast must be a wordy fellow.

II.

J. and I started a day or two later, and spent a great number of hours in a very hot railway carriage. It was well supplied with windows, having three available in each window-place—a plain glass one if we wanted light without air, a purple one if you wanted neither, a perforated zinc one if we wanted less dust. And there were cunning arrangements of circular grass screens with handles attached. By operating the handles you could revolve the screens and keep them wet, their lower segments being in water-troughs. The hot wind gushing in through the damp grass, you could lay your face against it and feel a little cool. But you could not do this and keep grinding the thing round all night. A neglectful railway company had failed to provide for this. At one halt three third-class passengers, and at another four more, were removed from the pens in which they were herded, dead from heat-stroke.

But we alighted at last at a little oven of a railway station at A., where the stationmaster, instead of demanding our tickets, presented to us a gold coin laid out on a silk handkerchief. This we touched and remitted, feeling better and greater men for the gesture. We can recommend this generous attitude on the part of the stationmaster at A. to his confrères at the greater termini of our country. Actions such as this would produce a spiritual uplift among the travelling public which would go far to increase their diminished numbers and to wean them from the road back again to the railway.

So there we were really launched on a two months' shooting expedition with everything thought of and nothing left behind. Only now remained to take over our elephant and start away that same night. And then we both remembered that although a date had been fixed, no actual meeting-place had been arranged. But this appeared a trifling matter. In a small place like A. we could easily find a large thing like an elephant.

"Any elephants waiting for us here?" We asked the stationmaster this, just on the chance of there being a sort of elephant cab rank.

The stationmaster waved his hand and said there were elephants awaiting our honours all over India. But this was only his polite way of saying "No" to our question.

"Your honours now going on the hunting? This our deestrict is proleefic of many larger animals, tigers, bisons, and whatnots. You will have good hunts, God save you."

"And God-den to you, stationmaster. But look here, we want to start after the whatnots to-night. Can you raise us a couple of carts?"

The obliging official simply bounded away to do this. And we saw how he did it. There were a couple of carts passing loaded with full grain sacks. In a voice of thunder he ordered the drivers to cast their loads off at once and to place themselves with their carts at the immediate service of two total strangers for an undefined period and destination. What's more, the men seemed perfectly willing to do this, and without going home to say good-bye or to get a toothbrush even.

Meanwhile we turned the station platform into a speak-easy. It was not a large platform; our deck-chairs, table or tub took up some of it, and our servants and kitchen most of the rest. It was no use sending a wire to Hill asking for the elephant's address, because we had no intention of waiting twelve hours for the answer. Instead Jones and I set off to find our elephant in the city of A. A. was not a large place, but it was a very crowded one—rather like a honeycomb, only more so. Somnolent and heat-stricken people crawled about its sticky labyrinths. There were quantities of fly-blown infants rolling in gutters, and the air was heavy with hot odours of spices and insanitation. It was now mid-April and three of the clock.

For two hours we wandered about, asking all and sundry whether there was an elephant, belonging to we knew not whom, waiting for us anywhere. The somnolent bees thus questioned thought we had at least one apiece in our bonnets, and went pityingly on their way without vouchsafing answers. Cursing the gentle Hill we returned exhausted to the station, where our eyes fell upon the water column. By Jove, the very thing! Cold water was all we wanted now, and here was lots of it. But the tap to the water column was locked. We applied to the stationmaster for it. He demurred. It seemed that the company had decreed that it should discharge its life-giving floods into nothing but locomotives. There were penalties for the abuse of this order. But in the end we prevailed. Well, try it and see! That great leathern trunk which hangs so listless over platforms can by a turn of a key come alive and discharge a perfect Niagara. Were these pages illustrated I could here insert a snapshot of Jones by me; another of myself by Jones, girt in a towel apiece, being crushed to earth by the weight of water falling on us. After that we made an early dinner, packed up, loaded the carts,

spread our bedding and selves on top, and rumbled away by starlight down the long straight road. By 1 A.M. we had done, very comfortably, the first of our ten marches to the famous jungles of Iriha. At that hour our patient oxen realised that their drivers had long been asleep, and that they themselves might take a little well-earned rest. Their coming to a standstill awoke everybody, but not for long. They were unyoked, the cart poles slanted to the ground, and our beds ran a little downhill, but we were all soon again asleep. Dawn and the flies woke us, and we prepared to spend the first of another exactly similar nine days.

We were in the midst of an almost featureless landscape. Our tree-bordered road ran straight across a perfectly flat brown plain, which was as hard and as naked as iron, and by noon felt like very hot iron. There was a large white well here, and a shady tree of the fig family growing up from inside it. Among its green leaves the ubiquitous Indian dove cooed and a little breeze whispered. That was all there was to our resting-place—shade, water, a whispering and a cooing. I have spent days amidst more upholstery and with less content.

After breakfast, an elephant, the elephant, the friend's friend's elephant, walked squelchily into our midst. The man on his neck explained. Our fatuous questionings in the hot labyrinths of A. had not after all been without their effect. These had come to the ears of and had been thus answered by the friend's friend. He had sent his elephant after us; and now the elephant had arrived, we found we did not seem to want him particularly. But here he was: he might turn out to be rather less white than we were disposed to think him just then. So we asked him to go away and moor himself somewhere. He did not recur again until that evening.

At sundown, as we were gathering ourselves for our next bound forward, the mahout appeared. He reported that his elephant was showing signs of going 'must.' He conducted us to the musty old beast, whom we found tied bow and stern to two stout trees. In addition, his forefeet were shackled together. The mahout pointed out certain sweaty oozings between eye and ear. These, he said, were the sure and certain preliminary symptoms of mustiness. The elephant looked benign and detached. He was said to be eighty-four years old. We did not know anything about must elephants, but the mahout was full of the direst forebodings. He said that if his elephant which was now only musty went really must, there would be hell to pay.

"Well," we asked, "what do you propose to do about it?"

"Keep him tied up tight

till the must period is past," said the man. How long would that be? Oh, days and days sometimes. Khuda janay (God may know): he did not. As we did not either, and as we were already tiring of this huge addition to our entourage, we decided then and there to discharge the friend's friend of all obligations to the uncle by marriage, and to leave the elephant behind moored to his trees for good and all. We told the mahout this. He seemed quite pleased. Anyone but an Indian might have said, "But what about me, leaving me here on this blasted heath all alone with the blasted elephant? Where do I come in?" Possibly the whole thing was a frame-up, enacted by the mahout, under owner's orders, to save face and to prevent a valuable animal marching away into the blue with two complete strangers.

The elephant thoughtfully snuffled up a trunk-load of dust, discharged it on to his head, and gave us a squint out of his little eyes. *He* knew.

An hour later we marched away south. Possibly a little later the elephant felt less musty and returned northward. Khuda janay. *We* did not.

For five more nights, that is while our metalled road lasted, our 3rd class sleepers carried us forward at the rate of two miles an hour. The rhythmic croonings of their wooden wheels made a pleasant lullaby. When that ceased we woke—usually at 1 or 2 A.M. —and watched the oxen taken out, and then to sleep again till dawn. The traffic we met during these nights was not quite that of Oxford Street, but sometimes huge carts, dwarfed under huger teak logs, came meandering down the centre of the road, or stood stationary athwart the fairway, the drivers sound asleep on their precarious perches; or we became somnolently aware of a glare and a jingling, as a postal runner jogged past, staff in one hand, torch in the other, bag on shoulder.

We spent the days either under trees by the roadside or at some forlorn and ghostly little rest-house. The latter gave us the better shelter from the April wind which now arose towards noon and daily blew hotter and harder. But we always left these rest-houses, and especially one of them, with feelings of relief. They possessed an eeriness, a dimness, a hollow echoing and an odour all their own. They conveyed vague hints and suggestions of evil, of murder or of suicides by lonely, heat-driven, overwrought men. I can call up, without the smallest effort, these rest-houses; can hear plainly the flappings of their tattered ceiling-cloths, the dismal creak of their punkahs, the spookish mewings of the April wind at the rattling doors and windows; and I can see through the latter the swirling dust clouds and dim yellow sunshine outside. Then on the seventh day, the wide

open plain ended, and with it the metalled road, and our last three marches were of an excruciating bumpiness over a stony track and between walls of nearly leafless trees.

On the tenth morning we awoke to find ourselves at our journey's end. Here we were in the centre of our shooting ground. This was a tract about the size of Surrey, in the midst of a vast estate the size of Northumberland. The estate was the property of a mad, drunken Rajah and was administered for him by our paternal Government. It was from the latter that we had obtained a permit to shoot over this corner of its ward's property. We had chosen it because it was very remote from railways and, we hoped, not too much shot over. The nearest railway station was the one we had come from nearly 120 miles distant. The nearest civil station, where were white men, was 120 miles in another direction.

We found here several things. First, the framework of a hut used by some previous sportsman. Secondly, a little hamlet so buried in jungle growth and creepers as to be scarcely distinguishable from them, and some very small, naked, black people, mostly with enlarged spleens. And thirdly, a humble salaaming person in a red baldric bearing a brass plate notifying that he was a Government official and calling himself a chuprassi.

Some of the small black folk were set to work in re-roofing and re-walling the framework of the hut with green boughs. It made a pleasant lodging, roomier and cooler than a tent, and fragrant of green leaves. A tent laid on the top rendered it fairly rain-proof and perfectly sun-ray proof. We could take off our hats inside without fear.

The little black folk wanted nothing better than to see our backs, so that they could produce their hidden bows from their thatches and resume their normal but no longer legal habits of the chase, together with a little business in the illicit distilling line. But though not pretending to like us, they made the best of us.

The fellow in the baldric represented the Government of India, which likes a finger in every pie and could not refrain from poking it into this humble pie of ours at Iriha. He was there to keep an eye on us. Without his kind offices we were theoretically unable to procure the simplest needments of life. He, on five rupees a month, was the last and humblest link in a chain at the opposite end of which was his co-link the Viceroy, on 30,000 rupees a month. And they had this in common —each found it hard to make ends meet, and each considered that his salary should be raised. His Excellency has never told me this himself, but these things get about. Of the two my sympathies incline towards the Viceroy—I mean I should

raise him first because he is said never to take bribes, whereas his co-link took all he could get.

We doubled the pay of our chuprassi from our private exchequer, so as to loosen his allegiance to his chain, and sent him off to procure a few young buffaloes as baits to tie up for tigers. He had only to go a dozen miles or so and started away briskly. But he never went anywhere really. He just lay up, after removing his baldric and handing it to the first wayfarer. To him he said, "Go to such and such a place, show my badge, and bring back the buffaloes. No, there's no money: the sahibs won't pay anything; they want them for nothing. And bring the buffaloes here to me without fail or it will be the worse for you." He made about three weeks' pay by that one transaction. When one can do things like that, life must hold savours totally unknown to people like the Viceroy and myself. But no wonder that we were not popular.

The little black people, still cherishing faint hopes that we might believe them and depart, said that in their locality there was no game whatever. We assured them that they were mistaken, and they readily agreed that of course they might be, that there might be a tiger about, perhaps bison, perhaps buffalo. Yes, and probably panther and bear. Their headman added, in a modest aside though irrelevantly, that personally he liked liquor, lots of it, and that it was procurable at twopence the large bottle, but that he had at the moment no cash about him. As he was as nearly nude as possible, we readily believed him and accepted the hint. Better relations between ourselves and the locality were thus established.

Within a few days one of our baits was killed by a tiger. A beat being impossible, we decided to sit up for him. We perched early, at four-thirty P.M., and just after dark—that is, at seven P.M.—the tiger arrived in our vicinity. At ten P.M. he left it. During those three hours he walked round us, sat about, slapped the leaves with his tail, and once only was visible as he passed across a patch of moonlight immediately behind us. He departed without giving us a chance. At the end of those three hours our eyes were nearly closed, not by sleep but by mosquitoes, who in wailful choirs had been making hay on our faces while the moon shone. We had not dared to lift a hand to save our skins, and the effort needed to sit in our cramped positions motionless for three hours had been no small one.

Next night we sat up again, wearing veils reft from our mosquito curtains. Again the tiger was in evidence, roared, and departed for good.

A week passed, interesting but not immediately produc-

tive. It grew hotter, especially the nights. A healthy man can laugh at hot days, but I have never met anyone who could smile at hot nights. Sleep even in a deck-chair (the sweat poured less in a semi-recumbent posture than when lying flat on a bed) was seldom possible till after midnight; and getting-up time was at about four A.M., just when we were properly asleep.

Jones left at five o'clock one morning; I remained in camp. At about noon one of his two trackers returned and reported, "The sahib has been mauled by a tiger." He said this just as if he were telling me that Jones would not be back for lunch. For 'mauled' he used the much more expressive equivalent 'torn.'

"Where? How far?"

"Westward: one hour."

"Badly torn?"

"Much blood runs. The sahib also ate a bite here." He touched his shoulder.

I was rummaging in our medicine box. I bundled a couple of field dressings, some spare bandages and a roll of lint into a haversack, hung on to the tracker a couple of felt-covered water-bottles containing boiled water, started, then remembered and came back for a cardboard box containing a glass syringe and a box of antiseptic tabloids to be dissolved in water and used for syringing out wounds. This syringe, as being rather an important item in my surgical repertoire, I carried myself, together with our emergency brandy flask, in a cartridge bag.

Then we hurried off. On our way I elicited a few facts. It had been a chance-met tiger, fired at and wounded by the sahib, who had then been charged and struck down. The trackers had been treed, and from there had watched what followed. Tiger and sahib had lain side by side. When the sahib tried to move away, the tiger had growled and kept him there. Then the tiger had died, the sahib had crawled away, and the trackers had come down.

I summed up the situation, the chief points in which were that it was now May and fearfully hot, that the nearest doctor was 120 miles distant, that our fastest way of getting to him was by ox-cart at two miles per hour, that for the first thirty or forty miles there was only the roughest jungle track. At this point of my meditations I caught my foot on a root and fell full length, the cartridge bag underneath me.

I found Jones propped against a tree in an open space. He was very bloody and very tattered. His tracker was fanning him with a branch. A tiger lay on its side dead a short space away. Jones was quite all there, and rather elated at what he called his luck. He seemed to think that the tiger was the object claiming my first attention.

As he was looking rather ghastly, I produced the brandy

flask and was about to give him a sup of the white man's emergency panacea, when I bethought me; I recalled a recent case of a mauled man having been given stimulant, and of this causing a renewed flow of blood, from which he died. So I refrained, much to Jones's disappointment, gave him aqua pura, and made a hurried examination of the wounds. These appeared to amount to one tremendous affair of two deep punctures, or rather holes, on the shoulder where the tiger had bitten him, and a torn thigh which looked bad but might not be so bad as it looked. There was plenty of blood, but scarcely any flow. I could have put my thumb into either of the holes in the shoulder. A clear case for the syringe and the antiseptic this.

While I was examining him, amid a torment of buzzing flies, he gave me a brief account of what had happened. He had been on his way to look for bison tracks, and just at daylight had seen this tiger, clear in the open and coming directly towards him. It was unfortunate that Jones should have hit on one of those very rare occasions when a man, on foot and in daylight, meets and sees a tiger in the open. Whatever he does afterwards, a wise man will not under such circumstances fire at a tiger coming towards him. But Jones fired, fired again, and failed to stop the tiger as he came for him. The next moment man and beast were in a close embrace.

"I expected," said Jones, "a most horribly painful scrunch when I felt his jaws closing on my shoulder, but the extraordinary luck of it was that he must have been an old beast with teeth and claws (for I scarcely felt them either) worn down. He only mumbled me a bit with his mouth; and his claws only scratched enough to tear my breeches and cause blood to flow. After that we lay together quite friendly-like. But as I wasn't feeling so very friendly, I several times tried to roll away. Every time I did that he laid a paw on me and stopped me. I don't know how long we lay like that; but after a time he let me go and I suppose he was dead. The trackers were all right, for they shinned up trees the moment I fired. I couldn't get them down for a good hour after I had rolled away from the tiger. And then you came along. I think all the same he must have cracked my collar-bone when he mumbled at me—the fingers of that hand don't seem to function."

I set the trackers with their axes to cut down a couple of saplings for a litter, and went and had a look at the dead tiger. Perhaps he was an old one, and perhaps those teeth marks were not so bad as they looked. A little blood goes a long way, and I hoped that the claw marks were not so bad as they looked. But no—he was a tiger in the prime of

life and condition. There was nothing the least wrong with the four great teeth. I put the measuring tape I always carried over one of them. It measured three inches clear of the gum. And I squeezed the pad of the paw and brought out the claws. There was nothing wrong with them either, except that they were red with Jones's blood.

When I got back to him he had fainted. This seemed a good opportunity to get busy with the syringe, and I plunged my hand into the haversack, pulled out the cardboard case, opened it, and out fell the glass syringe, tinkling to the ground. I had broken it when I fell. No syringe, and the doctor 120 miles away.

I washed out the wounds as well as I could, using only the boiled water, and then we started for camp.

On the way I turned over the two courses that were open to me. One was to let the injured man await the doctor quietly where we were in camp. This worked out to probably a week's delay, for our messenger would take three and a half days to do the 120 miles to get him, and the doctor as long or longer to come out to us. Then, too, he might be away in the district somewhere. The other course was to start at once and get Jones to the doctor. Travelling by night only, we might do the distance in a week—providing the sick man could stand it.

I decided on a third course. We had two postal runners who had come in with our letters, &c., two days before and were rested. These two (they always went together because of ghosts) had already done the double journey of 240 miles in seven days, and without any particular incitement to hurry. With promise of reward, they might convey a message and do the single journey in three days. I decided to send them off at once with an urgent note summoning the doctor and to follow them up ourselves, starting that night. If all went well, if the runners ran honest, and found the doctor without delay, and if the latter started at once towards us, I reckoned that we might meet at about the sixtieth milestone on the fourth night. These if's were quite numerous enough, and I had to add a final and a large one—*i.e.*, the question whether the sick man could stand four consecutive marches, three of them over a terrible road.

I wrote the note and despatched the runners by five P.M. We rigged up a camp-bed as a stretcher, for Jones had to be carried the forty miles to where the metalled road began. We collected twelve jungle men, who were to work as bearers in three reliefs of four men each, fed the patient on bovril with a dash of brandy in it, struck camp and started at seven P.M. At seven-thirty P.M. we passed a milestone at the

side of the track, kept carefully free of encroaching jungle, 'Malliapura 120 miles.'

The bearers and I continued on till two A.M., and then just as I thought it was never coming, the thatch of the expected forest hut loomed up, and we had finished that night's march. Close by the hut a lofty scaffolding shot up towards the stars. This was a fire-watcher's look-out. There were fires about, but luckily none in our vicinity. Our carts did not arrive till well after daybreak.

The little forest men had played up well. On an awful road and in darkness not one had put a foot wrong. But they were fairly spent. Jones had a temperature and was in considerable pain, but had stood the journey well.

Next morning the head tracker came to me and said that if I wanted strong bearers the second night I must shoot them meat. I said I was willing enough to do it if he would show me anything to shoot. He disappeared for an hour, and returning, beckoned me to follow him. We went a mile or so, and then cautiously pushed our way to the edge of a clearing, in the middle of which were the last remains of a marshy pool. On its far margin, and not a hundred yards distant, stood an eminently unshootable bison, being both very small and a cow. To shoot a bison over a water, and a cow bison under any circumstances, was an offence against the laws both of the Forest Department and of decency. But necessity recognised neither. The bearers had more meat than they could eat.

We spent the day in the hut, which was just a thatched roof, four mud walls, a doorway in each wall and a hard clean mud floor. The patient showed an increase in temperature, but persisted in regarding himself as a very trifling case, and took his victuals fairly well.

We had an uneventful second night's march. Jones seemed to stand it well. I began to bethink me. Had I been panicky in rushing away from our shooting ground and in summoning the doctor? Would he laugh at me for taking so seriously the holes in Jones's shoulder and his riven leg? I did not at all relish the idea of being a scaremonger. I comforted myself with recalling the few cases I had heard or read about of fatal results from lack of care of wounds inflicted by carnivora.

It was a very hot and a very long day spent under a fairly shady tree—a poor substitute for a thatched roof. Jones set all my doubts at rest by becoming worse. His temperature rose, he complained of great pain, he implored me to take off his bandages and to do what I could to relieve the throbbing of his wounded leg. He jibbed at another march. That was so much the more reason for hurrying on. The carriers were now

much farther from their village than such folk care to be. I had heard a good deal of talk and argument going on. But at seven o'clock that evening they made no trouble about starting. We continued on till midnight, and then had a ten minutes' halt. But when I wanted to start again, ten out of the twelve men had disappeared. I never saw them again.

The night was too dark and the road too bad to try to go forward with only two carriers and myself. There was nothing for it but to await our carts. Of these, one arrived at six o'clock in the morning, reporting that the other had broken down. The survivor cart had brought on a good deal of the load of the other cart, but now had to jettison about half its cargo in order to accommodate Jones. We had to leave the stuff just as it was by the side of the track, and to push on in order to reach our halting-place before it got too hot. Luckily only some two miles of forest and forest road remained. At eight A.M. we emerged on to a metalled road and left those weary trees behind us. Till then we had had to hold Jones down on his bed to keep him from being jolted off the cart, and he must have suffered agonies. At ten o'clock we reached our day's halting-place, got up a tent and put the patient into it, and had some food only just in time; for a dust storm began, and it became as dark as London in a bad fog. It blew a fiercer and a hotter wind than I have ever since experienced. We sat cowering in the swaying, buffeted tent, first in a thick yellow light, then in total darkness, listening to the fury without. After an hour twilight reappeared, and grew into daylight; and though the dust went on its way, the hot wind blew none the cooler. Often after a dust storm there is rain.

To keep the sick man cooler, we dragged the thatch off a hut, shook out the scorpions and stood it against the windward door of the tent. Water was thrown on this throughout the day, and the wind came through in cool puffs. But nothing, even sponging and laying wet towels on him, seemed to bring his temperature down. He in a manner was less unhappy than I was, for he wandered off towards evening amongst green pastures and beside still waters.

It was truly a bad day. I scarcely think I have spent a worse.

The damaged cart having repaired itself, as these country carts always manage to do, from any old wood lying about, arrived at noon and reported that it would have arrived earlier, but had been held up by a bear which would not quit a good find of termites in the middle of the road.

I paid off the two faithfuls—in money and beads. The former they accepted as a tribute to the fiction that they

were moving with the times. As a matter of fact they had little use for money and very few occasions for spending it. Two cheap knives, the reward of fidelity, filled their cup of happiness. Having received the above and fidgeted a little, the following conversation occurred :—

"Are the men who ran away to receive nothing ? "

I confessed that such indeed was my intention.

"But when we reach our village they will ask for their payment. They will think shame of you if you send no payment."

"Tell the dogs that if they will come to me I will pay them with bamboo."

"Yes, surely, they deserve blows, many and hard. But, look you, these men carried your sick friend for two nights without eating so much as one stumble, the road being bad and the darkness great. For this they must certainly receive payment." (Must ! quotha.)

"Why then did they leave us ? "

"Because they were afraid."

"Afraid of what ? "

"Oh, just afraid. When we jungle folk are far from our villages we are like that. We are afraid. When a man's afar off and afraid, he runs home."

I had had no intention of paying the ten defaulting ruffians, but their comrades wooed me with such russet yeas and honest kersey noes, that I yielded rather than rub off the bloom of their childlike faith in the straight dealing of the white man. I did not relish the idea of their going off and thinking me a cheat. So I handed over to them the small sum demanded, and felt no doubt that every farthing of it and every bead would be handed over to the runaways. For these jungle folk, though they might get drunk when they had the chance, and who certainly poached on Government preserves because they had been theirs to hunt æons before the Sirkar had ever been heard of, possessed a reputation for being constitutionally unable to lie or cheat. Sometimes, and for excellent reasons, they had been known to murder, but then the murderer would at once run any number of miles to hand himself over to justice. A very likeable people.

Yes, I repeat it, it was truly a bad day of slowly dragging hours, of parched skin, continuous thirst and a great yearning for rain, grey weeping skies, nipping eager winds, snow, even fog—anything devoid of glare and heat and dryness. I visualised all the much-libelled climatic vagaries of the British Isles, found any one or all of them heaven and my present surroundings hell. Time and again I cast up hours, distances, and rates of progress, in order to dead-reckon the place and hour of our meeting the doctor. And time and again, allowing that all had gone well with our messengers and that nothing went wrong

from now onwards, I failed to make the hour of junction one minute earlier than one A.M. during the coming night, and the place one yard nearer than the sixtieth milestone out from Malliapura.

At long last the sun, who had obliterated himself by his efforts during the day, showed up low down in his dusty sky and sank like a dirty florin beneath the horizon. I had meant to get under way an hour later, but was forced to wait in the hopes that it might get a little cooler for the oxen. But at eight P.M., an hour after scheduled time, it was as hot as ever. So we hoisted our poor babbler, bed and all, into a cart and started. I sat with him in order to give him from time to time a little bovril and brandy. It was very dark, cloudless, but with a dust haze covering the stars. We pushed on till two A.M., when we made a temporary halt as I wanted to have a look at Jones. I groped for his pulse in the dark—a job I always fumbled at and without being much the wiser. Still a pulse is a pulse. This time I could not find it at all. He was lying on his back almost naked to the waist, and I noticed the gleam of a little gold cross which he, being an R.C., wore suspended round his neck. I could detect no rise and fall in it; and then I happened to glance up and saw the loom of a motor's lights far down the road. This must be the doctor. Stout fellow! I climbed out of the cart, lit a match and read the milestone by which we were halted. "Malliapura, 61 miles." Not a bad land-fall; only a mile out.

Twenty minutes later a car stopped a few yards from us. Our carts (the drivers uttering soothing chirrups to their frightened beasts), the milestone, some wisps of thirsty grass, all starting out of invisibility, stood blatantly depicted in the glare of headlights. Then someone switched them off. A pair of legs began to issue from the car. "What's the matter with daddy's legs?" A temperance tract so named (goodness knew when or where I had met it) popped into my memory, or rather out of it, for it must have lain there awaiting this moment. I was not in a very ticklesome mood just then. Yet I was tickled, and felt the better for it.

The matter with Daddy's legs seemed to me, waiting impatiently on them, that they were several miles long and that they were being unwound from a capstan somewhere inside the car. Legs of such length could never be accommodated in a small space, except in coils round something. But they finished running out at long last and were clad in pyjamas. Then the other half of Dad appeared with equal deliberation, clothed *en suite*. We greeted without a handshake. Neither of us liked casual endearments. But we learnt this later.

"Are you the sender of a

note about an injured man? It arrived two hours ago, after I had turned in. I came as I was. It seemed urgent."

"I meant it to be."

"I'm Meakin, civil surgeon at Malliapura. Well, I'd better have a look at him."

I took him to Jones's cart.

"Mind the grease," I warned him, as he set foot on the wheel to climb in.

He was only five minutes over his examination. I could see him flash a torch, and hear him shake a thermometer. He asked me one or two questions and made a note by the light of the side-lights. I have retained ever since a mental picture of him as he did so. He was a very large and very long man of a singular boniness. There was a freckled face, a mass of tousled sandy hair on top, and a pair of menacing eyebrows like tangled bramble bushes. Two small blue sparks shone right down in the heart of them—eyes that might pierce or might twinkle; I was not sure which then. Lastly a ram of a jaw that looked like sinking any opposing substance on sight.

Where great issues hang on a man and he alone may hold the key of life or death, when there is none else to look to and no other earthly hope save in this one individual, then one looks closely and remembers well.

I had liked his prompt answer to my summons. I liked his quiet voice. I took note of his eyes and of that jaw. I summed my likings and my notes, and I felt at ease. Up to that moment I had been very tired, very anxious and full of prickly heat.

I had, however, to nurse my anxiety respecting my friend's condition. The doctor had been unable, of course, to make any real examination. Had he been able to, as I learnt later, he would have been very slow to commit himself to any opinion whatever. He asked me a few questions, seemed surprised at our having come the distance we had in four marches, and immediately ordered a forward movement to a rest-house a mile farther on. Before dawn we had Jones in bed and under a punkah, and the doctor produced from his car many and various things, amongst them being a small iceberg, chunks of which were immediately smitten off for use. I was sent off to bed, but warned that I was to start in the car to Malliapura soon after sunrise.

We forgathered again at six o'clock, the doctor still in his sleeping-suit, because he had brought nothing for himself. I now hoped for a sick report. When I asked for it he stared hard down the road and formed his lips for a whistle, but did not actually commit himself to emitting one. On my again asking, "How is he?" he shifted his eyes from the road—and they were now directed full on mine from the menacing depths of their

bramble bushes. His lips began to move, and I stood in expectation. Then he hummed the first two bars of 'Ye banks and braes.' Then finding himself all too communicative, he ceased. When I for the third time asked, "How is he?" he replied, "Ah, how is he?" "Yes," I said, thinking I had him down to brass tin-tacks at last; "how *is* he?" But I got no further. I began to observe motions in the doctor's eyebrows, and his sub-maxillary ram began to swing my way. I dared no further, and we sat down to early breakfast. During this meal, by a jerky series of drops of blood exuding from this stone, I learnt that Jones was bad, but might be worse: that several things, including a nurse, the doctor's clothes and hat, were wanted from Malliapura, and that I was to take a note in to Mrs Meakin and bring everything out. Twice he alluded to his wife as Daddles, correcting himself each time. Now when I hear a name I naturally fit a face, body and voice to it—so it was really the doctor's fault that I went off with a totally wrong idea of what his wife was to be like. Anyone with a name like Daddles must be a small, timorous, clinging person, and I gave her a lisp and a kittenish manner as well.

I arrived at Malliapura at about noon, and, having handed a note to the doctor's native assistant at the hospital, left the car to be oiled and fuelled, and went the few hundred yards on foot to the Meakins' bungalow. I should have been wiser not to have done this, and to have arrived in the car with noise and hootings. By these means I might have gained speedier ingress. It was mid-day and mid-May, a gale raging, dust flying, and all the world seeking to exclude both by sealing up their houses and going to sleep. Indian houses did not then possess bells or knockers, and not a servant was to be seen. Thrice I circumnavigated the shuttered house seeking some means of announcing my arrival. I was half-way through my fourth circuit when a door flew open with a crash and Daddles Meakin stood before me. Later it was explained that she thought that I was either a murderer, for I was rather blood-stained (Jones's blood—and murderers would naturally go about like that), or a mean white, because the skin was hanging from my nose, I had a four-day growth on chin and jowl, a four-nights-without-sleep leer in my eyes, and in a general way I was travelled-stained and disreputable. I had been too preoccupied to think of these things. So naturally Daddles was alarmed; and in a skysail-yard voice hailed me to know who the devil I was and what the devil I wanted. I advanced, holding out her husband's note. She took it with the tips of her fingers, but

obviously felt the need of a pair of tongs. While she reads it, I must describe her as she stood before me then and has stood many a time since then in my mind's eye.

Daddles was a perfect specimen of an infantile diminutive clinging mercilessly to middle age. We have all met this unfortunate type — the Gougou's, the Topsy's, the Tiny's, the Kissy's, the Posey's, the Lovey's—who looked and received these diminutives forty years ago, but who, being now stout and matronly, or large and dominant, or beaky and predatory, or tight-faced and horsey, or shrill and shrewish, or scarlet and scolding, would better answer to their proper names of Augusta, Carolina or Hermione. So with Daddles. She had been daddlesome some forty years previously, had contracted the habit, so to speak, and had never broken from it. She was a large beet-faced woman, larger and more fiery because of the loose flame-coloured wrapment hastily assumed, which billowed and roared about her like flames in the boisterous hot wind. As Daddles, the poor thing looked merely ridiculous. Had she come out as Britannia, helmed and bearing trident and buckler, she would have commanded respect, if not inspired awe, for she would have gone well as Britannia. I shall not call her Daddles any more, because though use long ago deadened me to the diminutive, this will not be so with you, my reader, and I would not have the best woman I have ever met appear ridiculous in your eyes. But that was how I envisaged her: what I thought of her when I first saw her.

She read the note, and her demeanour at once altered. She looked me over, referred once more to her husband's note, and her voice when it came again had changed from a bosun's bellow to a benevolent and husky coo.

"Yes—you do look as if you wanted it—a change, some food and some sleep. While you are getting these, I'll see to all Andrew says that he wants in his note. But you won't have much sleep, because we shall be starting back again this evening."

At her clap slaves came running: slaves of unusual aspect, speaking English, called by apostolic and saintly names—Christians all of them. Mrs Meakin explained them later. A stately and mature convert led me to a guest-room. Under his supervision, one neophyte ravished the doctor's wardrobe and laid it out for my use, another cherished me with long and tinkling drinks. It was respectfully suggested that my host's razors were awaiting me, and that when I had used them, a bath would be ready. I was presently bowed into a bathroom full of steam and groped my way into a stone sarcophagus full of water. Later, and under the apostolic eye of

the stately one, who was called Matthew, acolytes stood ready to pull the doctor's socks on to my feet, and to endue me with selections of his fine linen.

I found Mrs Meakin awaiting lunch. She was trimmer, more braced in, less flora-plena. Our lunch, which she called breakfast, was entirely iced, including the soup and fish. Which shows that it was really dinner —a custom of the Indian back-blocks of those days. I think it was about half-way through this meal that Mrs Meakin pained me greatly by inadvertently calling me Dearie, as she has since done many a time without paining me at all. But at that time this endearing term savoured of a distinct reflection on my youth.

My hostess took with commendable calmness her husband's sudden call from his bed on the previous night, and was placidly certain that with her Andrew to look after him, Jones would soon mend. She seemed to have considerable knowledge of maulings, and questioned me, far out of my depth, as to the extent and nature of the claw and tooth wounds. Her husband, it appeared, was constantly being scurried off at any hour of the day or night to deal with sudden cholera in remote and roadless places, or with snake bites, but more often with jungle folk whose faces had been removed by bears. Andrew's new faces were, she said, reputed to be as good as, if not better than, the old ones.

"You see," she went on, "he and I have not been blessed with children, so we look on our District as our family; and as it is always falling out of trees or treading on dangerous animals or getting into some sort of trouble, we're kept pretty busy, both he and I. They have often tried to transfer us from here, but we refuse to go."

Mrs Meakin also apologised for her language when she saw me walking round her house.

"I'm sorry about the language I used. I was terrified out of my wits. You looked pretty disreputable, you really did. I don't usually say devil and hell to people."

"You didn't say hell. I sometimes use it myself, and with another vulgar adjective in front of it."

"I know! I know!" cried Mrs Meakin eagerly. "Blinking or blasted?"

"Worse, far, far worse than either."

"Well, then, it's that other word; really a contraction of three other words—navvies use it."

"I'm not a navvy and I use it. In its literal meaning down to its last and sixth letter. I find it soothing, stimulating, in every way efficient. I don't believe it's a contraction."

"Really," said Mrs Meakin. "D'you think it would soothe me?"

"Try it and see," I replied.

I asked Mrs Meakin about her domestic staff, native Christians not being greatly in repute for domestic or any other purposes.

"You see," she explained, "Andrew and I used to run down native Christians, like we all do out here. And then it struck us that it wasn't quite a loyal thing to do—I mean to our religion. So we took on a batch. They weren't all saints. Some were sinners, like we all are, but we weeded them. We've never regretted it. And, don't laugh—we have family prayers. Some of our visitors are terribly pained at this. Some even make quite a personal matter of it. Attendance is not obligatory."

I was sent off to have a sleep. My hostess said—

"Here, take this magazine. I don't know who the old gentleman with the cloche hat and the flappy collar is on the cover. John Knox, I suppose. He wrote books, didn't he? I never get beyond him myself. But Andrew, who loves everything Scotch, says there's good stuff in him."

It was a stone-coloured magazine.

While I lay waiting for John Knox to perform his kindly office upon me, I felt that there was a something about Mrs Meakin. I did not understand then, though I did later, what it was, but I knew that it was a something wholly good; that if the recipient were worthy of it, it was a something that would remain always good, and that would last a lifetime. It was and it did. For on that day there began for me a valued friendship which lasted not my lifetime, but — well — till the Meakins, in the fittest manner possible for such a united couple, first he and a week later she, were transferred, and by orders that no one ever questions.

We started late that afternoon on our return journey to doctor and patient. A borrowed car loaded well below Plimsoll mark had preceded us. In our own went chiefly what Mrs Meakin called her *vade-meca*—suit-cases, rolls of bedding, a sun-hat for the doctor. Then things kept dropping in as after-thoughts: a stray cooking-pot, a basket of vegetables, two fowls tied by the legs, upside down, and squawking. These found peace in the doctor's hat. Later came at the double a small iceberg, weeping through all its swaddlings and sawdust. This, being rather an *et cetera* than one of the *meca*, was lashed on to the grill (Mrs Meakin's car appeared to have this unusual fitment). Here it did no harm to the other things, and some good to the sixty miles of road which it watered.

Last of all, a clattering on the hard road betokened the onset of Robert, aware that there was something up and unwilling to miss it. Robert

was a slate-coloured antelope of unattractive appearance, and about as big as a cow. Mrs Meakin sat composed and perspiring. We started with a jerk. One or two things fell off, but she waved a placid hand and said that these would come out with the daily bread and vegetables. Robert pursued us for a mile or so, but gave us best. I knew more about him later, a dangerously tame beast, sticking closer than a brother to the Meakin household. Many times he had been taken scores of miles away into his native wilds and left, but had always, and to everyone's disgust, reappeared. All hope of parting with him had been abandoned. There was something very dislikeable about Robert.

I complained to Mrs Meakin that her husband had been strangely reticent to me about Jones.

"He would be," she replied. "But as he says he only wants one nurse, you may consider that a hopeful symptom."

"Have you wired for her?" I asked.

"No—I'm the nurse. I was a nurse. That was how I met Andrew—at Guy's. Naturally I fell for him at first sight, and naturally he didn't fall for me—not at first sight. He was then a confirmed guneethrope—never looked at a woman. But it became mutual at last, and . . ."

"Excuse my interrupting," I said. "But would you explain that long word to me? Of course I see what it means, and I seem to have met it before, but spelt differently——"

"Why—you've heard of a misanthrope, haven't you? Well, guneethrope means the opposite, of course. I met it in an old yellow-back by Miss Braddon—all about a guardsman who hated women; and that's what Miss Braddon called him. He married the duke's daughter in the third volume. A lovely book. You don't get them like that now."

"But please go on," I begged. "You were in the middle of telling me how you proposed to Andrew."

"I didn't actually propose to him. Andrew would never have liked that. Well, we married as soon as we could. There was no one to stop us, for we have hardly a relation between the two of us. And then we came out here, and were as poor as church mice, and lived on chupatties and rice, and were as happy as anything. But now we're rolling—or would be if Andrew didn't spend it all on his hospitals and dispensaries and famine camps. He says I'm as bad as he is in my own way. Really it's the only way of getting rid of some of the colossal fees that rajahs and rich natives give him, especially when they come to him about male heirs and get them."

Mrs Meakin ran on with these homely little details till the darkness fell and the stars

came out. Perhaps it was owing to the malignant glitter of these that we found Andrew—your true Anglo-Indian (old style)—standing anxiously in the road (under a tree) in pyjamas, asking for his hat. He put it on at once, and, having handed over the patient to his wife, came out and joined me. He threw his eyebrows about a little when I again approached him about Jones, and said—

"What about dinner? It's late, isn't it? I expect my wife's brought some food out."

She had, and a good many other things. The sticky American cloth which was our table-cloth had disappeared, and so had the foul aluminium plates and things which but for the stickiness of the cloth would always blow away in a breeze. Our table shone with Meakin napery and cutlery, and groaned with Meakin cheer. Our camp candlesticks, which had the habit of suddenly belching their candles into the sky, were replaced with a clockwork lamp that purred and sometimes hiccoughed. The doctor opened out a little after a bottle of iced beer; and although he looked like ramming me once or twice, I too had imbibed hardihood and persistence from the same source, and kept on at him. Thus I learnt that Jones had had, or was rather having, a narrow shave from some longish Latin name; that he had wanted, or, strictly speaking, would probably want, nursing rather than doctoring.

Had the breaking of the syringe made things worse?

No—it had made them better. When Nature caulks a wound with clotted blood, amateurs had much better break than use syringes.

Well, using boiled water was right, wasn't it?

Perhaps. Better than dirty water. Best of all, no water at all. Leave well alone.

Giving stimulant would have been bad, wouldn't it?

No, not at all bad. The reverse.

This was more plain than pleasant. On the other hand, when the doctor asked about our forced march to him and was told that we had done fifty-nine miles in four nights, he became fulsome and said, "Did you, indeed?"

"But mind you," he ended, "all I say is"—and he proceeded to place nullifying conditions on all his statements. Finally, "On the whole, I'm inclined to think . . ." But the water was too deep at that end. He funked the plunge and went off to relieve his wife in the sick-room.

Still, a very likeable man, easy to caricature (which I feel I have done), hard to draw (which I wished to do). Another bottle of the same, even a small one, might have completed that last sentence.

The doctor stayed two more days and then left for Mallia-

pura. Thenceforward he used to come out every second or third day with our daily supply of vegetables, bread and ice. Mrs Meakin and I were left to look after the soon to be convalescent Jones.

The kind lady feared at first that I might "find the time rather a monopoly." Far from it. I trained as a nurse, and in a few days could punch a pillow and lift, turn and wash a patient with the best. I could also tip nourishment into my friend's expectant mouth with none but the most trivial inundations, never spreading far beyond his face.

I made mistakes naturally. When Mrs Meakin asked me to boil the serum, I asked if it was not usually injected uncooked. And she—

"What are you talking of, dearie? I'm not doing any injections. I only want a little hot water. You'll find the kettle and spirit-lamp in that little basket."

"Sorry—my mistake. I've always called it sirrum."

Jones and I had quite a warm little passage over a slight omission of mine. He still regarded the killing of the tiger as the main, and his own maulings as a minor, incident in an affair concerning which I held opposite views. He now asked after his tiger. I replied that I had last seen it lying under one tree, while Jones sat under another hard by. Further, that I had been rather occupied at the time.

"Why! you never had the skin taken off even?"

"No. The skin also appeared to be occupied when I last saw it—by the tiger."

"Now don't go being funny. You don't mean to say—— Why, you never just left my first tiger lying there without telling one of the trackers to do something about it?"

"They were also occupied in various small offices about yourself, and in getting you into camp."

"But, when you got there, you don't tell me that you couldn't have sent men from the village to bring in the skin?"

"But they, too—eleven men and a youth, all the village possessed—were too occupied in carrying you some of the way to where we are now."

On this, Jones turned his face to the wall to hide his tears. I believe that, being very weak, he shed a few.

After mastering his grief, his wrath once more asserted itself. He remarked to the wall, "The whole caboodle seem to have lost their heads. Might just as well have left me as well."

I administered comfort. I knew there must be a girl at the back of this. There always was with Jones. I felt that it perhaps was not the skin only that he wanted. A tiger has other tit-bits, chief among them being two small bones called the santokh. Mounted in gold they make nice

brooches. And girls wear brooches.

"I recovered the santokh, however, for you later on. Glad I hadn't the job, but these jungle fellows have no noses."

"Oh, thanks awfully, old man," abandoning his crony the wall and addressing me.

"I shouldn't give them to two different girls if I were you," I added.

"Not if I gave one to my sister, or, say, Mrs Meakin?" He was ever ready to ask advice. He never followed it.

The rains broke early; and on one of those fragrant, cool and verdurous days that mark their onset but not their departure, we moved from the rest-house at the sixtieth milestone to the Meakins' house at Malliapura, Jones being well on the road to recovery.

Then there came a day when the doctor so far committed himself as to say that his patient was fit to travel to a cooler place. He put a good many saving clauses to his statement, however, and as we were both unwilling to leave that kind and happy house, we took advantage of all of them. But at last they, too, all ran out and our day of departure came.

As we said good-bye and climbed into the car, Mrs Meakin, best of women and crowned Queen-Empress of All Malapropria, added a final gem to the many already adorning her diadem.

"Come again," she called to us. "And come soon, and *ave et atque*."

FASTNET, 1930.

BY L. LUARD.

"And what is the sea?" asked Will.
"The sea!" cried the miller. "Lord help us all, it is the greatest thing God made!"—R. L. STEVENSON.

WE built *Maitenes II.* a year ago to indulge in leisurely cruises, to enjoy short spells of handicap racing, and to enter her in the annual ocean race from Cowes round the Fastnet rock and back to Plymouth, a distance of over six hundred sea miles. Yet she is, after all, only a small sailing cutter of twenty-five tons and less than fifty feet in length.

The slender tracery of her lines and form, the flowing curve of her sheer, the lissom harmony of hull and spars and sails, meshed in delicate skeins of cordage, were alluring. We knew, however, that she was far from her best, and held a council of war; for, as someone said, "It is just that an ideal should have its rewards." We paid scant attention to outside scorn. Those who impugned the ship from knowledge born of lack of experience were free to thunder airy nothings. "A sou'wester," one gentleman observed, after condemning us offhand, "is always a sou'wester." We agreed most heartily that it could be nothing else; but forbore to remind him that missing pigs of ballast, in an ocean race, are mythical footholds upon which to climb the heights of Olympus.

From the first the colonel stated, in no uncertain measure, that her mast reminded him of Jacob's ladder. He willingly granted that the ones he dumped in his trawlers were rough-hewed, short-bodied stumps of trees, and that he might be prejudiced. But this contraption had no ending; he suspected it might be mistaken as an insult to heaven, and that heaven would visit an unmerciful wrath upon our heads. We could, with impunity, offend the idols of the market-place, and scandalise supercilious gentlemen who walked the foreshores in double-breasted monkey jackets and Gieve yachting caps, priced at one guinea; but beyond that we must not go.

The major, steadfast to tradition, advocated a return to gaff rig. That was all she wanted. If I consented, he would make a special journey to her home port, borrow a saw and cut the mast in half himself: he would die happy could he but hear the rasp of split grain as the teeth bit home, and he defied the champion lumberman of the world

—the wood hewer of Doorn—to do a better, swifter, or neater job. It would be the making of her; she would become sentient, a thing alive, —obedient, responsive, faithful to the ways of our hands and to the desires of our hearts.

We argued and debated by letter, and reached no decision. The days wheeled one into the other and fell into the limbo of forgotten things—fell away and yielded no result. The rest of the crew wrote and said they would, of course, risk their lives as often as was necessary, if I saw fit to leave the same mast in her. But it did seem to them a trifle heavy for the boat; she would do so much better with a new one. Surely I could prevail upon someone to take it off my hands?

The major became even more explicit. "Don't sacrifice common-sense to the dictates of fashion," he wrote. "The Bermudian rig is a snare and a delusion. It savours too much of progress; it is science confounding art, precision dominating consistency, justification in bondage to expediency. Scrap it! Sell the perishing mast while the craze lasts and the going is good. Then start afresh. But you won't, of course. You'll only tell me I'm wasting my time and my energy. So be it. Oh, yes; I'll come again, if I'm fit; but I'll ask you to supply me with a pair of spectacles. That eternal focussing of one's eyes aloft is beyond a joke—too much of a good thing. No help comes from there; and I'm not as young as I was. Still, I'm no old fogey yet, I assure you. After all, whatever the rig, we are at least trying to keep alive, in a humble way, the golden days of sail—one heritage still left to an island race. So go your own path. *Bene orâsse est bene studuisse.* I've no doubt you'll make a good job of your decision."

Then the colonel, writing from northern mists, exhibited a discriminating interest in our runner blocks. This was significant. He had, it appeared, already penetrated the recesses of my mind and resigned himself to a foregone conclusion. "I'm having," he wrote, "special double and single blocks made in my shipwright's shop. The ones you fitted to the runners this year gave me the jim-jams. Man, they were flimsy enough to be worthy of women's corsets! They should have parted at the first breath of wind. Use the same mast, if you must, but for goodness' sake let's make sure we can really keep it in her. I propose a preventer chain and a Blake slip, too, so as to eliminate chafe in the tackle rope. No matter what changes you make, I shall send them down. Fit them mighty quick and I shall sleep better o' nights."

Soon the harbour bowed to the might of equinoctial gales, dimmed before the cold stealth of winter. The swallows soared restlessly, congregated

in clusters near the lighthouse, and vanished one day into the curtain of a grey sea-mist. It was time to lift out the mast, and to take the boat to her winter berth.

We towed her to a dock-side crane and were met by ribald mirth. "Hi, mister," the donkeyman shouted down. "You'll 'ave to wait a good 'alf-hour. 'Tain't no good expectin' Liz to lift that great thing out o' yon little craft till she's nigh bustin' 'er pressure valve."

We waited. It made no odds, and there was nothing else to do. We waited, guarded by a crowd of restless shades who appeared from nowhere, prowled listlessly, and surveyed us with a sombre stare in the gathering twilight.

The safety valve of the crane spluttered and hissed; a plume of steam spurted in released energy, and the jib rose above us, its hook dangling like the noose of a gibbet. I took a last look at the spar. It had served us well. No doubt it would serve its next owner equally well. He had written saying that he wanted a mast even larger than ours, and had heard I wanted to dispose of mine. Would I give him full particulars, as it might suit him.

I did so with alacrity, suggesting deferentially that anything larger was not only unnecessary but also injudicious. Ours was of ample strength, true in grain, cut from the tree and not shaped from a baulk. If he agreed to my figure I would ship it to him, with all its rigging, on the next coastal steamer. He had closed with my offer by telegram and, furthermore, did not quibble at the price. Had the world turned over upon me, I could not have been more astonished; but it is not well to question the aberration of others.

The donkeyman's voice recalled me to the business in hand. He announced that the mast weighed over a ton, and reckoned that the lift was worth ten bob. If I cared to make it a quid he would finish the job and see it on the deck of the steamer. He had just time to place it there before dark.

I passed up a Treasury note thankfully. As the exhaust of the waiting motor-boat broke into life, and we slipped away in tow, I saw the spar, poised in mid-air, a dark outflung shadow. It glided athwart the dock, gleamed derisively in the glare of an electric arc lamp, then steadied like an immense skeleton limb over the uprising bulk of a wall-sided hull. One of my hands declared that he saw the steamer roll as she took the weight, and I was constrained to retort that it was high time he visited an oculist. He stared at me open-mouthed, but I was deep in deliberation of looming urgencies.

We settled her on the hard, at new moon, with due ritual, laced a cover over her stripped

and naked hull, and took our leave. One hardly knew her. She looked solitary, forlorn, unkempt, desolate, dead.

Perhaps it was the generosity of the colonel which, all unbeknown to him, brought a final decision upon the new rig, for was he not making runner blocks unheard of in the annals of yachting? His would be a harsh and unjust reward were we to change to gaff rig and discard them as useless; and I knew the major had little hope of borrowing a saw. There were points about the Bermudian rig that could not be denied. We could summon the handmaiden of craftsmanship and demand a light mast, investigate the science of aero-dynamics and fashion the sails to its latest theories, tune the rigging to concert pitch and handle a boat vibrant, nerve-taut, more dependent upon the skill of our hands and the resources of our brains. No, the gaff rig must be discarded. For our purpose it was obsolete; but, all the same, I had an uneasy feeling that the major was right. No matter. He would only thrust his beard in the air and become more like Captain Kettle than ever.

Then the creator of the boat, with circumspect sagacity, drew upon paper the two rigs, superimposing the one upon the other, and murmured that there would be little difference in the costs of conversion. The lure of that haughty spar was irresistible, and served only to confirm my decision. I ordered a laminated hollow mast and new sails, changed her trim and altered her inside accommodation, gave her new running and standing rigging, and waited breathlessly for the bills.

Everyone seemed delighted. The major said that she would be more of a beast than ever, his manner of expressing approval; the ocean racing crew wrote fervent letters of gratitude for a mainsail that needed six feet less hoisting; and the colonel announced that his runner blocks were progressing famously, and would be despatched in good time.

They arrived a week before we took her off the hard in the spring, and I stood aghast. Though of splendid robust workmanship, they were not blocks but mountains of wood—immense structures, strong as iron, heavy as lead, ponderous, unwieldy; the chains, dangling from their beckets, clanked like gyves.

I acknowledged them in a brief note, saying that I should write fully later on, then racked my brains for some solution. They could not be fitted. That was obvious. Tacking ship would be a labour of Hercules. All the shuffling longshoremen and disciples of Silenus would find scope for interminable witticism, and the ship would become as notorious as the *Judea* and the laughing-stock of the port. On no account could the colonel be confronted with jeers and derision.

I sent them aboard in a

wheel-barrow. The yard shipwright, old in years but cunning in skill, was finishing off a small job. He stared at me as if I had taken leave of my senses. "What be they for, sir?" he asked, his eyes dilating.

"Runner blocks," I returned airily. "It's no good fitting frail toys for an ocean race. Don't you like the look of them?"

"The Lord save us, sir," he ejaculated. "I've never seen their likes afore. 'Tain't natural. You'll lose men overboard diddlin' with them great things."

I shook my head sadly. "No fear of that. We're far too canny. It's strength we want, and here it is."

"Maybe," he retorted; "but I'll tell 'ee one thing. 'Tain't me that'll be seen fittin' 'em. I'll tell 'ee straight. 'Tain't in me to ruin a champion little craft." The hooter in the docks broke into strident call and cut short further conversation; but before leaving for his mid-day meal he treated me to a critical stare, as though afraid I were suffering from delusions.

I watched his retreating figure and suddenly saw light. Ten minutes later I was in the designer's office. "Tell me," I said, a little too anxiously, "what would be the effect of having no give in the runner tackles?"

He stared at me quizzically and smiled. "You should know that. Your mast would probably snap in a seaway."

"Splendid," I returned. "I was told in a letter this morning that hollow masts were more expensive to replace than the best mainsails, so anything that does not conduce to its greatest security must be scrapped."

"Yes; I saw you escorting a wheel-barrow containing some peculiar fittings this morning; and, frankly, I did not like to believe my eyes."

The devil he did not! So the news was already abroad. I fled without more ado, returned to the ship, carefully secreted the blocks from sight, and wrote that evening to the colonel. But his reply was worded too optimistically. He was not so sure about it. Sturdy rigidity was the thing to aim at in these days. Perhaps, though, it would be better not to fit them until he arrived. He knew exactly what was wanted, and could fix them up in a couple of hours. I sighed with relief, for we had three months' grace. Before his jovial rugged face smiled in greeting, anything might happen.

The new mast arrived, and was followed by the sails. The dockers aboard the coastal steamer in which it had been shipped, thinking it the property of a well-known shipping magnate, were frankly contemptuous. They told his lordship what they thought of him in no uncertain measure. They uttered unprintable remarks; they suggested that it would serve as a tooth-pick

for one of his sanguinary decayed molars; and cursing and blaspheming, they lifted, hove, strained, struggled, until its tapering length swung clear of all obstructions; the spar was lowered in the water to a final burst of invective—a gleaming marvel of silver spruce, the shell as smooth and lustrous as a sheet of polished glass.

But the ship had no heart to accept this symbol of vital impulse. She refused to float at spring tides, lying neaped for another fortnight in perverse immobility. We made quite certain of it the next time, and lashed a dozen barrels under her bilge to buoy her reluctant spirit. And the tides, held back by north-westerly gales, lapped at her hull, a full foot below their true level—scornful and indifferent.

We should have known better and let her be; but an outraged pride incited us to action. We would have her afloat on the next tide—by Jove! If she thought she could waste a month of summer with impunity she was mistaken. This time she should be dug out—dug so deeply into the sand as to attract the most sluggish of tides. One felt her resentment and wondered; but we dug ruthlessly with pick-axe and shovel, watching her sink into the oozing mire well below the level of her keel. Had we possessed her power of prevision we might have hesitated, but we rubbed our hands instead, became vainglorious, and chuckled, for we were only human.

She floated easily enough a week later, yet everything conspired against us. We were held up, waiting for a quiet spell to ship the new mast, delayed by trivial and vexatious trifles, and hindered by unexpected problems connected with the sails and the rigging. Before we were ready for sea May had flung its tempestuous wrath far afield.

Realising at last that we were in earnest, the ship took on the courage of unfaltering purpose, and concealed her foreknowledge. With the major's help we sailed her over to Brittany, put her through her paces before the eyes of her delighted builder, stormed back on the wings of a south-westerly gale, and gave her a final tuning up in a week's racing at Plymouth. We were satisfied. Three first prizes in five finishing guns spoke well for the new rig.

We reached Cowes ten days before the start of the ocean race. Mr Paskin, a friend of old, the soul of hospitality, and an ever-present help, rowed out to greet us. "Well, well, I hardly recognised the ship. She looks different and she'll sail different." He glanced benevolently at us through his spectacles, ran his hand up the mast, and searched aloft, alow, taking in every alteration with the eye of a master. "She ought to carry full lower sail where you double-reefed before."

"That's exactly what she will do," I replied.

"Then you ought to win, given your own weather," he continued. "There's over a week to go yet; but I don't like the look of it. The dog star's up, and I'm afraid we're in for a dirty spell. More's the pity, for I'd dearly love to see you pull it off; but it's weight and size that tell in heavy weather, and the little ship's a shade too small for the job in those conditions. Still, you're not overmasted this year like last; you're not handicapped by rotten gear as you were the year before in that other man's ship; and really, major — though you weren't with them then, and I know I shall be forgiven—the first beautiful little ship was not quite the type for the job. I never slept a wink those first two nights of 'twenty-seven for worrying about them. Now don't forget my pier, shop, shed, and everything else is at your disposal. Make yourself at home and use it as your own. I've always time to look after you, however busy I am."

"Ah," said the major, a gleam in his eye, "I shan't look after 'em this year. Doctor's orders. I've seen 'em up to this perishing place, and I'm off West before the pernicious pageant of Cowes week starts. They can go to the devil for all I care."

He cared a lot, of course; but his doctor was not to be denied. For a few days we felt lost without him. He would have kept us in high spirits with his comments, and there was material in plenty. The high and mighty of the land commingled with those who thought themselves high and mighty. Model dresses from Paris rubbed shoulders with cheap copies from Houndsditch; Mayfair jostled Margate; and a multitude of blue tags and red tags, pinned on the lapels of coats, informed us that their owners held open sesame to sacred precincts.

Mr Paskin was right enough about the weather, the winds of heaven playing havoc with racing. They blew with spite, with malice, in unchained gusts of tempestuous fury, snapping masts, splitting sails, conniving at collisions, and causing even loss of life. They marshalled together in legions, in a solid phalanx, displaying uncurbed wrath and unbridled lust in the might of dominion. At night the massed riding lights, reeling over a foam-tossed sea, flickered everlastingly like clustered constellations.

II.

Fastnet, 1930. We shall never forget that year. When we are old and venerable, we shall recall those seven days at sea and liken them unto seventy. We shall tell our

grandchildren that nine seaworthy ships set out to race over a course of 615 miles, and that only four finished, their logs showing over one thousand miles; and our reward will be found in half-concealed smiles, discreet gestures, inaudible comments, and pitying glances.

The crew joined one by one—eight of us altogether and Baron, our hand. It was interesting to watch their faces as they stepped aboard. The veterans of last year's race looked aloft and smiled, while the glance of those new to the ship seemed vague and troubled. They were worrying about the mast, of course; but the colonel soon put them at ease. "Six feet shorter, lads, and half the weight. Ye'll no be lookin' aloft like last year."

"True enough," said Jerry, with a slow smile. "Though we'd like fair weather, we needn't pray for it, as in *Lassie*."

"Waal," said Harry, a young lanky American, "I'm gla-ad to hear it. I figure it out that a guy who prays for fine weather ain't got the makings of a seaman."

"Don't you pray for bad weather," Kirk admonished. "You'll know all about it if you do."

"Say—is that so? Guess that just tickles me to death."

"Tickles you?" Jim and Hopford returned; and Larry's glass eye stared with rigid fixity.

"Right here," Harry caught up laconically, pointing to his solar plexus. "Daown deep in little Mary. Harry'll soon be wishin' he was way back in O-hi-o, not sloppin' down seasick dollops, an' masticatin' chewin' gum."

"Ah, well; 'it's out with all we've got. Neglect no means,'" I said.

The colonel fixed me with a steady stare. "Ah'm thinkin' o' that. Where's them runner blocks, lad?"

We went on deck and unearthed one from the sail locker. He handled it fondly, looked at our present ones, and frowned. "Ay, by gum!" he murmured. "'Tis middlin' big. Will t'others hold? 'Twould be better, maybe, to leave well alone."

"It would save some expense," I replied deferentially.

"Ay, 'twould. Put blocks away, lad. Ah'll put, instead, another share in t'ship. Ah know just what mast an' sails cost, an' all t'rest o' gear."

This fell like an unexpected piece of luck, for the expense had been great—greater than we had estimated; but he waved aside my thanks, and we set to work upon our last job. In a grey misty dawn, the next day, we put her alongside a quay wall to give her underwater body a final coat of racing antifouling, and slopped about in quagmires of mud, sandpapering her down and paying up. We would rather have hauled her out on a grid and let her dry for a day or so; but the price was exorbitant, and we had

much ado to find a hard the owners of which were not afflicted by inordinate lust for gold.

At last we were ready. The commodore, who had provisioned our ships four years in succession, gazed at us pensively, still unable to fathom this midsummer madness. "Do try and bring me the cup this time," she said; and we vowed, by all the fates, that failure should not be for want of trying. Mr Paskin stepped aboard to say good-bye, and to inculcate the ways of the tides. "Don't forget, now, you've the flood. Keep her in the channel and clear of Ryde Bank. Once you're round Noman's fort work inshore. Keep her in—right in. In round St Catherine's—in, in, all the time. Work down channel inshore. Yes; I know some say keep out. But not this year. You'll get head winds and short high seas. Aim for calm water and let the tides go rip. It's your only chance in a small ship. The odds are loaded against you as it is. For goodness' sake don't make them heavier."

"Inshore then it shall be," I said, still hankering for open waters.

"Now you mean it, don't you? I shall be on holiday at Plymouth when you finish; and I expect to see you well up, if you keep to your word. If there's anything I can do there to get you ready for the Santander race, let me know. You won't have much time to spare. I'll be down directly you arrive. Now I'd better be off. I see mainsails going up. Don't forget what I've said. I won't wish you luck; I'll wish you your weather, which is far more important."

We took stock of the situation and surveyed our rivals. There they were—eight ships all preparing for sea, large sturdy ships, a heavy weather fleet capable of standing up to anything. The tanned mainsail of *Jolie Brise* rose, slatting in the wind. Perhaps the finest ship of her size afloat, of nearly double our tonnage, and with an Atlantic passage to her credit, she held in every line and curve the secret of speed and seaworthiness. Close by, *Neptune*, a fast cutter of sixty tons, lay lean and slim as though poised in arrested flight. Her curved bow, sharp and trenchant as an axe, flowed swiftly into the slope of her forefoot, into the long line of her hull. A headsail rose slowly in stops, and the clatter of cable grinding in her hawse was the first note of purposeful activity. A sudden burst of light played, glinting, on the black hull of *Lelanta*, an American schooner, throwing the ship into sharp relief; her spars swung steady arcs against the sky. I remarked to the colonel that she had the appearance of a flier; but he smiled warily, asserting that she would never look at us upon the wind. Moreover, he was prepared to bet that none of the ships between thirty and forty tons—

Ariel, *Viking*, *Magnet*, and *Amaryllis*—would challenge us on any point of sailing. He was only concerned with the three large ones, and with *Ilex*—the last, perhaps, the most dangerous of all. He was right enough there, for the small yawl of about our size was manned by the Royal Engineers, a hard devil-may-go-lucky crowd of splendid seamen. "Ah'm thinkin'," he said, "we'll need all them fourteen hours off scratch boat, cum scuffly weather."

The mention of our handicap made me look at the watch. It was time to go. "All ready for making sail," came Jerry's voice from for'ard.

"Up mainsail," I said, and watched the canvas rise foot by foot in slowly unfolding flakes.

As we cast off from the pier a shore boat drew alongside with an express letter. The major had not forgotten us. He outlined concisely point after point of practical detail making for easier working of sail and halliard; he besought us to get the best out of her to windward no matter the cost in fatigue. "I shall be watching for you at the Lizard, if Tregeagle's not howling," he wrote. "Don't forget, when working inshore, the wind-pocket off Rame, those secrets of the turn of the tide you should know so well, Tom Wild's advice about cheating the ebb in Plymouth, the eddies I told you about, and the only way of making full use of the flood. It's minutes you may want, and it's there that minutes can be made. When I wake each morning, during the next week, I shall give praise for merciful dispensation."

First over the line, with a clear lead of nearly a cable, we ran out our spinnaker boom to starboard, and struggled with a sail that seemed bewitched. What ailed them for'ard? They were muddling and fumbling like a crowd of old women. Had the major been there it would have been set minutes ago. I looked astern. The bow waves of our pursuers broke in diverging ridges of splayed foam that closed us steadily under a sky black and lowering. Hard on our quarter the tanned sails of *Jolie Brise* were sombre pyramids of billowing canvas. There was no time to waste. We were losing ground, wasting seconds, minutes—precious minutes we could never recover. I forbore to glance at the shore for fear of being held by accusing fingers. Mr Paskin would be muttering inaudible comments while wiping his spectacles, and the commodore was surely standing mute and grim in sorrowful reproach. Yet the ship was doing her best for us. She had known all along the weather in store, and was now voicing a final warning. But the spinnaker was set.

We were barely in time. An enveloping cloak of darkness moved over the face of the waters. A tremulous sigh

merged into a harsh explosive sibilance, a drumming hiss. Suddenly the sea turned white; I shouted and waved, and the colonel jumped to cast off halliards and outhaul. The squall hit us a reeling blow, and the ship quivered to the shock, recoiled, and flung forward in a tearing onrush. We held hard. A spatter of rain turned to a vicious lashing torrent. The air was grey, was solid, was full of flying water and whipped up spray driving and rattling on the sails like continuous charges of shot. For'ard, six hands were fighting a spinnaker that threatened to hurl them overboard. It thrashed and flogged like a thing demented; it jerked and wrenched, bellied and leapt, slatted and flayed, a corybantic mass of vaulting canvas. But they had it at last and tumbled aft. They lurched, reeled, spluttered, gasped, and choked. They were drenched, soaked to the skin, streaming water from every garment; but they pointed to the swirling smother of our wake and laughed. The wind screamed in the shrouds, a far-flung echo of derisive triumph.

The squall, sudden and explosive like a Pampero, stormed ahead. A weak infiltration of light was an elusive reminder of returning day. We rubbed our eyes and looked at our rivals. Only the big ships were ahead, and two had broken their spinnaker booms. The colonel chuckled, but stared in dismay as *Jolie Brise* ran out a spare one. "Ah'm no laughin' so soon cum next capful," he muttered, and went below to change his clothes.

There were signs of fresh winds; but the glass remained high and steady. We rounded Noman's Fort, fourth, and hauled up, with sheets still checked. Already the fleet was unwinding itself, and we could hardly see the stragglers. Before lunch was over we had rounded Bembridge ledge buoy and were full and bye.

The colonel, comforted by hot stew, could not repress his returning spirits. He peered up at the mast and grinned overtly. It stood staunch and true, at ease with its lofty eminence, confident, unyielding; and the gilt ridge of the truck was steadied in perfect alignment. "Ay; she's slick, by gum!" he murmured. "Ah can hear the song o' her. 'Tis soft like a lass's croon."

In the smooth water under the lee of the island the ship started to show her paces. She heeled bravely to her press of sail, slicing through the sea as clean as a whetted knife. A flurry of foam burst under her bow, boiled and seethed, and broke into a swirling wash that played along her sides in creaming ridges. The smother of her wake trailed astern, a liquid ribbon, and the flowing curves of her sails were lissom pyramids of straining samite. At times the luff of the mainsail broke into tremulous life as though in veiled warning.

We dropped the ships astern faster than seemed possible, and overhauled two of the leaders nearly as fast. We flung about and stood inshore. Before we had tacked again *Lelanta* lay well astern and *Jolie Brise* was less than a cable ahead. The colonel pointed to *Neptune*. She was clearing the shelter of the land and standing out to sea. Her hull disappeared, rose, streaming water, and small oilskinned figures were working along her deck. Up aloft her topsail sagged and crumpled as if suddenly robbed of life, then started slithering down the mast in hurried submission. Her bows slanted high, revealing the glistening incline of her forefoot. They steadied, in an imperceptible immobility, then toppled into a green declivity. A wall of spray blotted her from vision.

We should have taken her behaviour to heart and reefed in calm water; but the lure of pursuit was an open seduction. We were pointing higher and eating to windward. In a few minutes we should snatch the weather gauge from *Jolie Brise* and find ourselves forging ahead. We could stand up to full sail in that fret o' wind, as we lived. It was only local. The sky a-weather was clearing fast and becoming a benign immensity of pacific splendour. We had only to hold on for an hour or so and drive her through the race off St Catherine's Point to see the white fingers of its sinister lighthouse become the symbol of baffled purpose.

We put her at it. The point of clustered rock, projecting like a shark's fin on our starboard hand, soared as we dropped into the hollow of the first sea. The crest of a wave curled and tumbled aboard, cascading along the fore-deck. We started to plunge and reel. The ship buried her bows continuously, rose sullenly, and staggered. There was more weight in the wind than we thought. It was blowing fresh, more than fresh—strong; and the squalls piped wickedly. We sailed her a ramping full, and she responded gallantly. She started to smash a headlong path, to pound, to labour. She was hurled about, wrenched, banged down, flung up. At times the decks were lost in masses of tumbling water. The wind boomed aloft exultingly, and the air was solid with sheets of spray. Some of the watch below, scrambling on deck, cried out that she was turning their innards over, and one yellow haggard face crawled into the cockpit, with gaping mouth. The yellow tinge became a leaden green; a huddled body crouched to leeward. "Give it up, lad, give it up," the colonel encouraged, and Jim's voice muttered that stew was indigestible. No doubt it was. Sir William Monson had long discovered this. "A boisterous sea and stormy weather," he once wrote, "will make a man not bred on it so queasy sick that it bereaves

him of legs, stomach and courage, so much as to fight with his meat."

"Devilish indigestible," Jim repeated.

Larry concurred, holding hard to the weather runner. His throat worked ominously and his glass eye wobbled. He made a halting step, thought better of it, then stared in blank dismay. "Not to windward, lad," the colonel roared, and ducked not wholly to avoid the top of a sea. But Larry knew his job. We saw his bedraggled figure prostrate on the cabin top, and there was no harm done, though his body worked convulsively. He gasped, "Pardon me," and gave unto the sea, "Pardon me," and was again delivered; then turned a mottled face aft and begged our pardons. "Say," Harry exclaimed with puckered brow, "that beats Abraham Lincoln. The guys in O-hi-o 'll call that cute."

"Splendid," said Larry, scrambling to his feet. "I wouldn't miss this for anything."

"Ye won't, lad," the colonel retorted grimly.

But it was time to shorten sail. She was lying over to her second deck plank—dragging herself through the water, labouring. We manned halliards and tackle — lowered away. No sooner had we tied down the first reef than the wind freshened viciously. We held on for a few minutes, our gaze steadied on the weather horizon. This was beyond a joke. We careered over to a screaming squall till the cabin top lay awash, and I had a glimpse of kicking limbs and wriggling bodies slithering away to leeward. A mountainous sea reared suddenly into vision. It towered over us, toppled, and broke upon our exposed bow with a resounding impact, flinging a liquid column, a sinuous waterspout, overhead. For a moment the ship, shuddering like a creature in pain, disappeared in a foaming maelstrom. She lay over on her side, robbed of life, her exposed bilge curving high, her long mast canting perilously, her boom trailing its weight in a surging backwash. She rose sullenly, disgorging cataracts of water, and Jerry held up two fingers in urgent inquiry.

With staysail to windward, we hauled down a second reef. The halliards were settled and the tack was bowsed down; but the clew seemed imbued with nefarious intent. The hands on the reef tackle pulled in unison and gained a foot, tugged spasmodically, to an erratic lurch of the ship, and lost an inch, hove and strained to slipping feet and reeling slanting bodies. Then a batten jammed in the topping lift. The colonel hoisted himself astride the boom. He lay on his stomach and wrenched and jerked, his short sea-booted legs dangling precariously; he wriggled and twisted; he watched the motion of the ship with vigilance, and clung like

grim death to her headlong dives. But he cleared the batten and slithered back to safety, the lust of battle in his eye. He roared, "Aha—shake her!" and swept down an arm. "Oho—bust her!" and lunged forward. "One, two, three, smother her wi' her white dress on!" and jumped to the tackle, swinging back with all the force of his fourteen stone. The clew came home and was racked, the reef lacing was passed, and three hands worked for'ard to shift the staysail.

"Jehoshaphat!" Harry exclaimed, scrambling into the cockpit for a breather. "D'you guys term this weather araound here a typical British summer?" And Baron was heard to reply that the channel was often enough an ugly ol' place and could frighten many a man out o' his daylights, to make no mention of scatting a ship abroad.

"Yep; that don't saound exactly cheerful," Harry returned.

"'Tis a funny ol' mortal the sea," Baron caught up. "I could tell 'ee a thing or two. Say what 'ee mind to; but 'tis powerful 'nough to turn a man's blood to cabbage water."

We were in happier mood. The ship, relieved of her press of sail, leapt at the seas as though reborn. She was forging ahead like a conqueror, lunging and slogging with wild abandon, pounding and smashing a headlong path.

"Goin' along clean as a li'le mackerel," Baron exclaimed, drawing in his breath with a grating hiss. "'Tis time, I think, for a cup o' tea, a dish we Cornish jacks do dearly love."

We had our tea and it was piping hot, though Baron paid tribute before the kettle had boiled; but we were settling in, finding our sea-legs, becoming inured to her motion, and the wind was easing.

The fleet, scattered far and wide, were splashes of white, elusive like will-o'-the-wisps. Well ahead, but to leeward, we glimpsed the canvas of *Jolie Brise* and *Neptune*, a nebulous mist of white and umber glowing, luminous, in the rays of the westering sun. They were standing out, staking all on an offshore course, driving and buffeting into a tumbling sea; but on our beam the white escarpment of rocks that form the Needles rose gaunt and clear. We laughed and came about, for Mr Paskin was not to be traduced, and the promise of sheltered waters was as alluring as the city of Zion.

We closed the land rapidly. *Ilex* and *Amaryllis* held to our track. They had no business here, and we watched them anxiously. A great shout went up as the large yawl went about and headed offshore, drawn, as by a magnet, in pursuit of the leaders. *Ilex*, driven might and main, clung to our heels with dogged persistence, refusing to be shaken

off. Suddenly the colonel sprang to his feet, fixing her with glittering eye and outstretched finger. I glanced astern, hoping to see her sails ashiver; but she appeared to be holding an unyielding course. A low mutter tremored in the air. There was no doubt from where it came, for the colonel's lips were working; and I could hardly believe my ears. He was ordering her about with esoteric ritual and inaudible incantation, appealing to, and propitiating, Poseidon and the Nereids. His staunch oilskinned figure, poised in balanced sturdiness, was a symbol of forgotten seafaring generations, a pregnant reminder of the heritage of superstition. I flung up a warning hand, invoking St Anthony, but was too late. *Ilex* had turned into the wind's eye, her sails flogging and slatting as though exorcising a sinister spell. For a moment she steadied, then filled on the offshore tack. The colonel's hand dropped to a relaxing rigidity of body; he turned to me impassively, and his face held a strange smile. "Ah knew she'd go, though ah'm no sayin' why, lad."

Jerry, who had been watching him open-eyed, broke into speech. "You're mad, colonel. Better go below and have a tot of rum. You'll feel better then."

"Mother o' mercy!" the colonel breathed.

An hour later we had made full sail, and were hard by the cliffs of Old Harry. Their looming structures rose pallid and spectral—ghostly fortifications of the shore. Low on the northern horizon a cluster of lights flickered.

"The lights of Bournemouth," said Hopford, sighing.

"And Bobbie's tea-rooms," Larry caught up.

"And Miriam and Deborah," Hopford pursued.

The colonel snorted and addressed the sea violently. "What d'ye think to it? Ah've sent *Ilex* aboot her business, an' lads doan't care. Taalkin' o' towns an' teas an' chasin' skirts. Ah'll give 'em summat to think aboot afore trip's over—by gum!"

"I'm thinking about it already," Hopford returned mildly.

"Ay," the colonel chuckled; "ye'll no be thinkin' much cum two days. Ye'll be tryin' to forget love o' women in sleep."

Hopford sighed. "Well, there's one thing about it. I'll be able to enjoy the blessings of the land when I get ashore, even though they're not the fruits of my labours. Aren't we getting a shade close in, skipper?"

We held on a few seconds longer. The tide was pouring east in turbulent flood, carrying with it upwelling darkness. We had failed to make Weymouth Bay by little over an hour, and were now hard put to hold our own. We crept on, short tacking, standing offshore for half a mile, coming

about, and steadying our bows to within a stone's-throw of the shore before making seawards again. It was anxious work. The dark bulwark of the land, muttering to the breasting surge, was an overshadowing menace that towered, by turn, over masthead, receded into void, reappeared like a looming rampart, an entrenched citadel. On one peak a beam of light, flooding over St Anvil's Point, threw its luminous path afar.

Before the middle watch took over we had slashed through the confused belt of water off St Alban's Head and were snoring into the bight of the coast, cheating the last of the tide and increasing, every minute, the pace of our westing. Overhead black negation had given place to lucent glitter shining hard and cold in frozen points; and the opaque shadows of clouds were drifting islands moving upon the vastness of the heavens. A shooting star trailed a blaze of light athwart the scintillating lantern of Capella, and was followed by a wavering coruscation. "Fair weather," said Kirk, nursing the glow of his pipe; and I had concurred before calling to mind a line learned in childhood—

> "And oft, before tempestuous winds arise,
> The seeming stars fall headlong from the skies."

No matter. The wind was tending to veer; the glass was high and steady; if Boreas threatened uncouth pleasantries we had the weather gauge, as well as a weather shore. All the others were tumbling about in the troughs of the channel. They would be caught far to leeward in exposed waters; and the signs were good.

The colonel, coming on deck, saw the metallic glow in the northern sky and was moved to speech. He reckoned, if luck was with us, that *Jolie Brise* and *Neptune* would be contemplating the winking eye of the Casquets with no great relish. That northern light would be talking to them as plain as a pikestaff. Their profanity would be sweet to the ears, as sweet as was the language of an American who had recently bought one of his trawlers. He had bustled into the office one morning with a get-rich-quick manner. He wanted a ship mighty slick, as slick as they could darned well sell it; and he would have them remember that buying a trawler was no more than buying a sandwich. He had figured it out that as Grimsby hated Hull like poison he'd have her vetted by a son of a gun from there. The ship was surveyed, passed as sound, and the deal was closed. But a surveyor, rushed off his feet by hustle, has no chance of spotting defects. The colonel intimated that a fractured winch frame was less easy to swallow than a sandwich, and a good deal more expensive into the bargain. The Ameri-

can stood nonplussed; he swore some; he dropped his glass and stared at the scattered fragments; he guessed they had gotten one over him and had Bob Boston beaten. But when the colonel offered to effect the necessary repairs free of charge he nearly collapsed, though a stiff whisky soon pulled him together. "Say, brother," he exclaimed, holding out his hand, "you've taught Bob S. Boston a walloping lesson. I'm a darned sight wiser. Shake, brother. Put it there. I'm right glad to have met you."

"Say, colonel," Harry interrupted, "I guess that dope had a spice of Uncle Sam and John Bull mixed up for my benefit."

"'Twas cosmopolitan, lad," the colonel retorted.

With the first of the fair tide we made the Shambles light vessel. The red eye of Portland light, winking solemnly on our bow, drew abeam, turned white, extinguished to the light of day; and the ship romped across Lyme Bay. She was doing nearly seven knots close-hauled, shouldering aside the scalloped seas with a supreme indifference, flinging an arching bow wave.

Before noon we had the guiding column of Dartmouth daymark abeam. The true hard north-west wind lightened, veered and backed, swooped in petulant squalls, lulled, dropping finally to a fitful breeze—the expiring sigh of troubled might; but the tide was under us and we swept past Start Point, another danger point of the course.

That afternoon we sighted a sail to seaward, standing inshore close-hauled on the port tack. The blurred speck of white seemed unable to disengage itself from the line of the horizon. We became perturbed. Decreasing visibility meant a change of weather; change of weather threatened loss of tactical supremacy. If the wind hauled round to south-west we were in danger of losing all we had gained. We watched the glass with vigilance, surveyed the sky, the sea, the contour of the coast. Baron declared that he could smell advancing mizzle. He pointed to Rame Head and announced that the nose was cut off the land; he raised a wetted finger on high to test the dryth in the air. It was difficult to make a decision. We could stand out in anticipation of southerly weather, stand in and reap the reward of shelter so long as the wind remained steady, or stand along the direct line from Bolt Head to the Lizard in short tacks, risking no loss and chancing no gain.

Then Jerry asserted the sail was *Neptune*. He could tell her anywhere by the cut of her topsail. She would cross our bows two miles ahead. Our spirits rose. She was giving us fifteen hours, and was undoubtedly leading the fleet. We searched for *Jolie Brise*,

but the shrouded horizon was a lustreless void.

In less than an hour she had intersected our course. *Neptune*, as we lived. We threw weather tactics to the winds and started in pursuit. We would follow her up, cling to her heels, hold to her like grim death. Her fate would be our fate, her wind our wind, her path our path. We held her without difficulty. In this easy full sail breeze she was unable to shake us off. We held her and became troubled. What was she doing right inshore? Soon we should be able to tack and lay the Lizard. She was off her course, standing in too close, standing — by heavens! —into Plymouth.

"*Neptune*, be blowed!" Larry exclaimed.

"*Neptune*, I'm positive," Jerry insisted. "She's given up."

We shook with laughter. Given up? This was a good joke. The colonel suggested he should lay the odds. Were there any punters at two to one against? And he would take twenty to one against her beating us. Then Baron shouted that the pilot cutter was shaping a course to intercept us; he could see Tom Wild standing in the bows and waving. There was no time to waste, though. We were on our line and must tack. We came about and steadied. A column of smoke spumed from the cutter's funnel as she altered course and gave chase. What on earth did they want? Soon she thought better of it and hoisted a string of flags. Our answering pendant went to the dip. "N. E. P.—*Neptune*," the colonel read. "*Neptune*, lads—*Neptune* out o' the race," he boomed. We gave Tom Wild a resounding cheer.

Nevertheless, we should have been more circumspect. That echoing cheer boded no good. A swift-moving vengeance heaped in the southern board, dark and lowering, and the ether was resonant in urgent warning. We had no need to listen to an indifferent voice intoning what we already knew, though the area affected was large enough to cause concern. An elemental disturbance west and north of a line joining Exmouth and Berwick-on-Tweed had the Atlantic as its footstool.

It was too late to alter our tactics. The colonel asserted that the wind would veer before the middle watch. We were on the outer edge of the depression, which was surely moving north. That sudden fall in the glass could mean nothing else. As soon as the wind had veered, the harder it blew till we reached Land's End the better for us.

A pale watery sun dipped below the dark line of the coast, and grey gloom flooded the sea, trailing mist and murk below a solid canopy of cloud. The gloom rolled over the blurred shadow of the shore in advancing curtains, deepened, and became a void.

We had barely time to haul

down three reefs before the storm broke, hard-fisted and brutal. In an hour the ship was tearing along, her decks awash. The wind seemed solid. It wrenched and buffeted, roared and boomed, howled low over the ship, recoiled and lunged as though to lift her clear of the water, volleyed and exploded. The sea was a hissing mass of flying spume, was white as a plain of snow, was seething like a boiling cauldron, was beaten flat by a torrential rain.

Before midnight the wind, veering four points, hurtled and stampeded off the shore in a maddened fury. It piped so hard that we crawled about the decks for fear of being blown overboard; it smothered the ship in continuous belts of spray; it roared and scuffled gigantically. We drove on, more by instinct than by reason, robbed of sight, robbed of hearing, robbed of thought, robbed of speech. The hours passed; our sodden clothes became heavy; but the ship was logging nine knots. Nine knots under a weather shore! We should have laughed and sung!

The Lizard light appeared ahead, glowing pale and volatile; and a flashing ray from the Manacle buoy on our beam was a warning spark of hidden danger. All at once the Lizard extinguished. We rubbed our eyes and looked again; we searched without result; we stared ourselves stupid and were unrewarded. The thick blanket of swirling mist swept upon us with a subdued hiss, and the wind dropped to a sobbing whine. The ship flung upright, her sails rippling shrouds agitated by a ghostly hand. They became phantasmagorial, dissolved slowly as though corroding, were expunged in clammy waves of vapour. The ululating wail of the lighthouse syren echoed like the lament of a lost soul. "'Tis weather enough," said Baron with bated breath, "to watch for the hand o' Satan."

Certainly something incomprehensible had happened to the weather, for the wind flew to the west, rolled back the fog, forced us offshore into a heavy ground swell, fell away, and left us becalmed. We unreefed to a restless roll and tore the leech of the mainsail on a wire runner. Then Jerry discovered the seizings of our top six mainsail slides had chafed through. There was nothing for it but to put into Mount's Bay and effect repairs. We pulled the sails all over her in a desperate effort to cheat the tide. Baffled by light fickle airs, we headed inshore and gained no ground. We stood out again and were mocked by heavy lurches that spilled the wind from our sails. "Whistle," said Hopford, and suited the action to the word before we could clap hands over his mouth.

This was the last straw. The colonel gave way to a stream of invective and never repeated himself. He intimated that though the culprit could fly

to Fastnet and back in four hours, he was now aboard a craft that would take four days to travel the same distance. Before he finished he would learn that superstition cannot be flouted. Ninety-six hours of perdition would teach him a thing or two.

"Rot, my dear colonel, a relic of the dark ages," Hopford returned sceptically.

"We do say," Baron remarked uneasily, "that 'whistles rash bid tempests roar.' 'Tis a turrible long step 'way out to Ireland."

It seemed a long enough step into Mount's Bay, for the weather was berserk. The wind, without warning, sprang dead in our teeth and blew a gale. The ship, overpowered, dragged herself through the water. We kept her at it, trusting to the rigging; drove her mercilessly, our eyes glued to the leech of the mainsail; hardened our hearts, like Pharaoh, and scorned caution. We could hardly believe, when anchoring off Newlyn Pier, we were only forty-eight hours out.

For a few minutes, unbalanced by the steadiness of the ship, we reeled about the decks like drunkards. Some seemed a trifle light-headed. They shook their fists at the weather, threw off their oilskins and laughed it to scorn, jerked at sea-boots, and bore it all manner of evil. And the wind, taunted beyond endurance, wrestled with the ship, forcing her steadily on to the bows of a sheltering coaster. We weighed, re-anchored, dragged. We weighed again, beat closer inshore, and tried once more, paying out cable to the bitter end. At last she held. The colonel was moved to assert that "fools who came to scoff remained to pray."

All that afternoon we worked against time. Baron announced that the slit in the sail was "a teasey ol' place," and set to work inserting a shift. We rove new chafing gear, overhauled and ended halliards, tightened rigging, reseized all mainsail slides, patched, tinkered. Before the first dog watch had ended the ship was ready for sea, but the wind seemed as hard as ever. It came cascading off the land like a rushing torrent, poured tumultuous overhead, tore low over the waters of the Bay, sucking up layers of spray and spindrift that spread seawards in diffused screens. We looked at "dark Bolerium, seat of storms"—and pondered. There would be more sea than we could deal with off the Longships. It seemed doubtful if we should make headway. Would it not be better to wait till the weather moderated? We debated the matter over a hot meal, worried ourselves sick, then sprang up like men possessed. What was that? What was the broadcast announcer saying? Yes; *Neptune*, certainly. *Magnet*, too? *Lelanta*? *Ariel*? That four competitors had abandoned the race seemed too good to be true. We hauled down three

reefs and put to sea. Before the Runnelstone was abeam, the gale had weakened—wearied of its violence.

Perhaps it was as well the positions of the other ships remained unknown, for we might have become too elated. *Viking* and *Amaryllis* were far astern, and did not count; but though we had led *Jolie Brise* up to and beyond Plymouth, she was now six hours ahead, and *Ilex* clung to our heels, a bare sixteen miles away.

We cleared the Longships at dusk and found the wind ahead, driving before it a confused, tumbling, troublesome sea. At dawn we shook out one reef, and by noon were under full sail; but two hours later we were back to two reefs, punching into a steadily rising wind that blew for ever dead on end. The colonel, despairing, demanded rum, and was given Dubonnet by mistake. He called loudly upon the name of Jonah till silenced by the glazed fixity of Larry's eye staring at him distorted and askew. He flung off his streaming oilskins, muttering incoherently.

Down below we were in sorry plight. Jets of water spurted through the fore-hatch as she plunged into a sea, splaying fanwise over the fo'c'sle; the galley, dark and dismal as the black hole of Calcutta, emitted fetid odours; heaped masses of sodden sails and clothing congested saloon and cabin floors; and the supine bodies of the watch below were shadowy forms sunk in the shades of death. Over all a thick clotted haze floated.

Darkness fell upon a deserted sea as the wind eased to a full sail breeze. We were miles to leeward of our direct line, miles away from our turning mark; but we gave thanks for this respite and threw her on the starboard tack before midnight, fearing renewed guile and deceit. A high clear dawn broke calm and untroubled below the curving dome of a sky that held the polished lustre of beryl and agate. The molten crucible of the sun marched steadily to the zenith, glowing like a disc of burnished gold upon a glittering sea that stretched away immense and flawless to the horizon. All day we ghosted west, catching the rustle of light airs with lofty canvas, urging her ahead to whispering breaths of wind, basking luxuriously in a benison of warmth and heat.

That afternoon the glass started dropping, and *Ilex* hove in sight. We redoubled our efforts. She was coming up from astern, carrying a breeze, creeping over the rim of the horizon, yet our canvas hung in folded ridges, unstirring, mute, drooping, dead. Before the successive flashes of Galley Head lighthouse stabbed the darkness of night she had closed to within two miles on our port beam.

We lay becalmed, hour after hour, upon a phosphorescent

sea. At times drifting eddies sighed fitfully in the sails; a low monode of parted waters murmured at the bows. The ship was wreathed in the stillness of shadowy repose.

The colonel shook me at dawn with the news that *Ilex* was three miles ahead, disappearing into a heavy mist. He had fixed the ship, but it looked like a pea-souper. How she had carried the wind all night, stealing this march on us, flummoxed him. There was a Jonah aboard, and the sooner we got rid of him the better. He suspected more than one person, and airmen seemed as notorious as parsons. Why not maroon a couple of hands on Fastnet Rock and break this spell of wind and weather?

Before I could answer the ship heeled to a light breeze and woke to life. A wall of vapour swirled round us, deepening to a grey clammy gloom. We groped ahead, straining ears for the explosive fog signal. Bank after bank of convoluted murk rolled from seawards in yellow umbrous clouds. There was nothing to be seen, nothing to be heard. The world had become a blank negation awaiting a creative word; but when the lighthouse-keeper shouted to us at noon that *Jolie Brise* was sixteen hours ahead and *Ilex* had slipped round three hours ago, we recovered full power of speech.

Our only hope was to drive the ship for all she was worth. We should be able to hold *Ilex* with two hours still in hand, though successful pursuit of *Jolie Brise* meant halving her lead. It was well, perhaps, that we remained ignorant of her true position. Had the colonel realised that she had found a favouring breeze, after rounding the rock, while we were lying becalmed twenty miles away, he might have resorted to desperate measures.

"Thank God for a fair wind," Larry exclaimed. "We shan't know ourselves with checked sheets."

"Balloon jib?" Jerry questioned.

I nodded.

"Up she goes, lads," the colonel encouraged, swinging on halliards. "Away wi' her! Aha—shake her! Oho—bust her! One, two, three, smother her wi' her white dress on! Sheet her home, lads, sheet her home!"

We hauled heartily. The gruff ringing voice was a resonant urge. We moved about the decks in high spirits, coiling down ropes and overhauling halliards. Fair wind! Fair wind! Who cared about mist and fog? The ship, lifting to her billowing canvas, streaked away in a burst of effortless speed; but as she settled into swinging life a sudden flutter aloft changed instantaneously to a wild flaying. We payed off, point after point, in despairing silence, shifted sails. This was more than vexatious; this was monstrous, inhuman, dia-

bolical. We gritted our teeth and pinned down sheets. Before dark the ship was sundering a grey desolation, double-reefed, to a glass that brooked no denial. Fatigue and weariness increased. There was no rest, no peace, no quietude. We moved like robots and had the eyes of idiots. The matted growth on our faces lay rimed with salt.

Early next morning the wind eased and flew into the north-west. The glass jumped up, rising in a vertical gradient, and the temperature dropped ominously. Under a bellying distended spinnaker, the ship started logging eight knots.

We felt that our troubles were over. This breeze was more welcome than a gift of fortune. Fair weather! A famous shove! A wet sheet and a flowing sea! We rubbed our hands and chuckled.

Once again we should have known better. The wind increased steadily, increased to a moderate gale, a fresh gale; and the sea rose rapidly. Before noon we had handed our spinnaker and were discussing the question of reefing. It was now or never. There was still time to round up and snug down; soon running under full sail might become precarious; a wicked lee shore lay ahead and we should make it at dusk; but visibility was good and we could see afar. We flung caution to the winds and held on, for was not *Hex* ahead?

Surrounded by hurrying hills of water, the ship ran headlong, as though fleeing for her life. She logged nine knots, nine knots and a half, ten knots, then threatened to become unmanageable. She rose high upon foaming ridges, careered wildly down steep declivities, laboured sullenly in foam-tossed troughs, dipping her boom in heavy lurches, then jerking upright like a creature distracted. We steered her with care, with precision, with growing apprehension. Great seas, rolling up with crested curling tops, overhung astern, broke, and swept ahead in sheets of boiling foam. Black squalls, white squalls, rain squalls, line squalls detonated over the ship, alternating with bursts of flashing sunshine. Soon she attempted to broach-to. She cried aloud as though in pain; she flung forward in dizzy rushes, quivering in every timber; she stormed off by the lee and tried to gybe. The seas astern were monstrous columns of water. They uprose suddenly in twisted pillars; they towered like crumbling cliffs; they crashed down with a roar as of thunder.

There was no denying it. We were caught. Having failed to meet the emergency, we had now to make the best of a bad job. Our seamanship had proved unequal to the occasion, and we had no option but to run on and trust to luck. We ran on at still greater speed, pursued by tumbling towering

avalanches of water, and the colonel declared we were doing eleven knots. "Shall I read the log?" Kirk asked, and, foolishly, I consented. He crawled aft along the counter, and bent over the glass dial. The ship rose on the jagged crest of a sea, lurching suddenly to a pelting squall. "God!" the colonel muttered, springing to his feet. I flung round in time to see Kirk's body describing a short parabola. My heart stopped, yet in the fraction of a second half a dozen thoughts flashed into consciousness. "Overboard. Lost. No man could be seen in that sea, much less rescued. We could not attempt to round up. We should lose our mast and perhaps the ship. We must make the attempt, whatever the cost. Hard down!"

Then his falling arm crooked round the mainsheet which extended taut, a rod as of iron. He dangled. The ship reeled to windward, lifting his body clear of the water and swinging his legs inboard. The colonel grasped them, holding like grim death. He awaited his opportunity, waited, it seemed, for a lifetime, then jerked him to safety. "Fine," Kirk remarked, "fine: don't squash me, old chap. That mainsheet would make an excellent horizontal bar in a gymnasium. But I think I'll go below and have a tot of rum."

"Ay," the colonel said kindly, "'twill pull ye together, lad. Tell 'em below to send one up for skipper an' me."

We had our rum. The potent elixir warmed our chilled blood, steadied our nerves, stimulated.

"He'd ha' slipped his cable, had he gone," the colonel commented. "We could ha' done nowt."

"You mean," I asked, "we should have been wrong to attempt a rescue?"

His eyes stared steadily. "Ah'm no expressin' an opinion. 'Twould ha' been a decision ah'd no like to make."

I nodded. It was better now to think of other things.

We streamed oil bags over the bows and paid out warps, with drogues attached, astern. Somehow we had to check her speed, to ease her, to minister to her struggling spirit. It seemed, at times, she could live no longer. We waited for the final stroke, the culminating blow, the ninth wave, with unconscious resignation. Harry, declaring that he would rather drown in his bunk, went below and turned in; but most of the others stayed on deck. That lee shore could not be denied; and upon the accuracy of our dead reckoning depended, as likely as not, our fate. The two silent figures, wedged high in the shrouds, were statuesque in steady vigilance.

Hope was not long deferred. We hit midway between the Scillies and Land's End as dusk closed in on a decreasing wind. The colonel, after cutting the warps with slashing

blows, flung his sheath knife overboard to a ringing shout, and Jerry took over the helm. It seemed droll to reflect, as we shot under the shelter of the land, that two hours ago we had been discussing the expediency of cutting away the mainsail, with the added hope it would flay to ribbons before whipping the mast out of her, and the fervent prayer that Parson Troutbeck's Litany would remain unconsummated, for his invocation that wrecks might be guided to the Scilly Isles was brazen enough to tempt the devil.

At midnight the Lizard was abeam, and before dawn the glare of Plymouth lights hung low in the eastern sky. We crossed the finishing line, seven days out, less a forenoon watch, and ran into Milbay Docks. Before we had secured the warps, Mr Paskin was aboard. "Well, well," he beamed, "you have had a rough time. *Ilex* had her mainsail down in that last blow coming home, but you've done splendidly to get second prize to *Jolie Brise*. *Viking* gave up yesterday and put into an Irish port, and there's only *Amaryllis* left. I *was* thankful you did not hoist your spinnaker and spoil a splendid start. That squall would have whipped it away."

Of course! He had seen nothing. The heavy sheet of rain, long before reaching us, had obscured his vision. One could not disillusion him now, and I dissembled outrageously. "A wonderful stroke of luck!" I said.

THE STRANGE AND EVENTFUL HISTORY OF CORMAC O'BRIEN.

In the autumn of the year 1891 I accepted an invitation from a planter friend, long resident in the Kangra Valley, to accompany him on an expedition into the Upper Himlayas in search of snow leopard and kiang, for which he had a commission from a Continental dealer. The supply of the rarer Himalayan fauna to animal dealers was a side-line to this old shikari, whose knowledge of the remoter mountains and their denizens, man, beast and bird, was unique.

Within a week I joined him at his tea-garden near Dharmsala, now long deserted, for the advent of Big Business into tea planting and the exploitation of more accessible places has ruined the once flourishing tea industry of the Kangra Valley. Of the expedition itself I need only say that it was successful, some fine specimens being secured and delivered at Bombay, with consequent profit to round off a pleasant, if at times perilous, excursion.

One incident of this expedition, absorbing at the time, had long been forgotten, until a few days since, when, searching through my books and papers, I came across the life history, set down in his own hand, of one of the last survivors of the Golden Age of the Military Adventurers in India. After nearly forty years, it may be as interesting to others as it was to myself and John Ramsay when we first read it by the smoky light of a camp lantern.

The memory of Cormac O'Brien survives in Kangra legend to the present day. He raised and commanded a considerable body of troops of all arms for Sunsar Chand, the Katoch Raja of Kangra, and not only trained them, but like his fellow Irish adventurer of a few years before, George Thomas, cast cannon and made muskets, swords, equipment and munitions for his soldiers. He is mentioned in the records of the Nepalese War of 1814-15 as having, "without the consent of his employer," offered the services of his contingent to Sir David Ochterlony, who, as the British were just then in a bad way, accepted them thankfully. However, the offer was summarily cancelled by the Raja at the instance of Ranjit Singh, and, though he did not dismiss O'Brien, he was exceedingly angry with him. O'Brien remained in his service as commander of his troops and manager of the Kangra finances until the year 1827, when he died worth some Rs. 60,000, a fair fortune for an ex-private soldier once on about 1s. a day.

We left the garden for the upper hills on the 21st Septem-

ber. Just before reaching camp on the second day, I noticed, topping an eminence in the near distance, a ruined fort, which seemed to differ considerably from the usual constructions which stud hill-tops in the Siwaliks and outer Himalayas. To my surprise Ramsay, when questioned, seemed very loth to give any information. All I could extract from him, after persistent questioning, was its name, Kaffir Kot, and that it was supposed to have been built by an Englishman in the service of the Raja of Kangra about one hundred years before. Nor could I gather any more from the servants and followers, who all seemed to dread the place, saying it was haunted by bhuts (demons) who guarded some graves within the fort. Like most men who have lived a solitary life in the great mountains, Ramsay was superstitious, and a firm believer in demonology and occult influences. He tried hard to dissuade me from visiting the place, going so far as to admit that he himself had done so, many years before, but had been so upset by the uncanny atmosphere that he left after no more than a casual look round from the gateway, and had never again gone near it.

Such opposition and mystery naturally made me the more determined, so, after an ineffectual attempt to enlist a guide, I rode off alone, and about two o'clock arrived at the foot of the hill. The cliff rose sheer from the bed of a stream running through a fairly wide valley; the back and two sides were washed by the stream, which rejoined at the farther end, where a fairly easy slope gave access to the summit. The remains of a paved ford were skirted by stepping-stones, and, after tying my horse to a stout bush, I crossed to a track, up whose winding and rock-strewn surface I clambered to a small plateau. At the farther end stood the fort.

On three sides the cliff fell sheer away from the wall, but the front faced a small glacis, about eighty yards wide, and forty from the edge of the plateau to the gateway. As I had surmised, the construction differed widely from the rough square of mud, rubble and boulders, which comprised the usual old hill fort, this being well built of dressed stone, with bastions at the corner and an arched gateway flanked by two towers. There were three embrasures on each side of the gateway, and both bastions and curtain walls were crenelated and pierced for musketry. The loopholes in the towers flanking the gateway were very low down, apparently to sweep the walls at the foot.

The place seemed outwardly in perfect repair, save for a great crack at the joining angle of the right bastion and the wall, probably caused by subsidence due to an earthquake, the Kangra valley being especially subject to these convulsions

of nature. After a short rest I crossed to the gate, through the grass-covered plateau, which was now drying off after the cessation of the rains, and entered the archway. On both sides were guardrooms, reeking with damp, over which glistened the slimy trails of snails or slugs, and I particularly noticed, still standing in the lamp niches, a few earthen saucers which had once served as oil lamps.

The remains of the great gates, which had swung in the stone sockets on either side of of the arch, now lay in rotten ruin, mingled with the rusted plates and rosette-based spikes which had once strengthened and armoured them, nearly all covered with rambling bind-weed. Kicking this aside, in the hope of finding something, I was rewarded by the fragments of a sword blade, and the earth-filled barrel of a ponderous flintlock pistol, on which the date 1807 and the initials "C. O'B." were plainly decipherable amid the corrosion.

Putting the pistol barrel in my pocket as a valuable clue, I emerged from the archway. Before me lay a desolate, weed and thickly grass-grown enclosure, whose bare outer walls, devoid of all but the charred ends of a few great beams hanging precariously from the wall sockets, stood desolate to the sky. In the midst of the square a low wall showed above the vegetable growth, and in the right corner lay a great sunken tank, lined with slate, which was half-full of green and rotten rain-water and weeds, amidst which floated obscene-looking toads, staring with unwinking eyes at the intruder on their age-long solitude, whilst in most of the cracks above the water-level were bright-eyed leather-skinned lizards, some of whom shot out their forked tongues in venomous resentment.

Leaving the tank, which had apparently served as the reserve water stock of the garrison, with a shudder of disgust, I progressed along the inner walls. Opposite the sockets of the beams which at one time had formed the roof timber of the living quarters and the firing platform for the cannoneers and musketeers, lay, in tumbled ruin, the pillars on which their outer ends had rested and between them the débris of the roof, intermingled with ashes, showing that fire had been the main agent of destruction.

As I moved through the high grass, more ashes crisped beneath my feet; and once my foot crashed through what, on parting the weeds, I saw to be the arched ribs of a bleached skeleton, whose deeply cloven skull grinned up in sardonic greeting as it rolled away from the vertebræ. In the far corner lay a heap of human bones and skulls, blackened and corroded with exposure.

The place was a charnel-house, dank and dismal, horrifying alike to sight and smell; a chill wind blew through the archway and the embrasures,

rustling the dried tops of the long grass. It was unutterably depressing. I turned to leave, knowing that such a state of mind conduced to fever or chill.

As I did so, the enclosure in the centre caught my eye; and ashamed to leave with my self-imposed task half finished, I summoned the remains of my courage and approached it. I found it to be a small graveyard with a single opening and two graves, one merely an almost obliterated mound, but the other a raised tomb covered by a great slab of dressed slate. Behind this stood a pyramid of some twenty or thirty skulls, most bearing marks of sword-cuts or bullet wounds, and all blackened and moss-grown. From the top skull, as I picked it up, dropped out fragments of a cleanly separated vertebræ, which showed that the skull must have been freshly cut when placed in position.

On the slab appeared an inscription incised in rough Roman letters, which, after cleansing, I found to run :—

IN BLESSED MEMORY
OF
ISA KOUR
BELOVED WIFE
OF
CORMAC O'BRIEN.
DIED
18TH FEBRUARY
1814.
R.I.P.

I delayed no longer in quitting this abode of death and desolation, overcome by the terrible evidence of an ancient tragedy, nor did this feeling leave me until I reached the foot of the hill, where it was dispelled by the pleasant plashing of the stream over its boulder-strewn bed.

But my horse was missing, having broken his reins and fled back to camp. His arrival caused so much alarm that Ramsay and a search party set out, more than half-expecting to find me dead or sorely injured; for, ever since my departure, the local men had been relating terrible tales of the dire misfortunes, or the death, which had befallen most of those who had dared to enter the fort.

Much relieved at finding me uninjured, he now told that the fort had been raided and destroyed by a party of Gurkhas in the early years of the century. He had ascertained that the graves within were those of the wife of the European builder and of his lieutenant, another European, who had been killed by the Gurkhas, together with the whole of the garrison, during the absence of the Qilladar on a raid into Gurkha territory, there being eternal war between Sunsar Chand and the Gurkhas.

He saw nothing of the skulls and bones within the fort, for though he entered it, he was so disturbed at the prevailing atmosphere that he almost ran

away on the spot. But he knew from an old inhabitant, who had it from his father, that O'Brien pursued and killed many of the raiding party, whose heads he brought back and piled around the graves. Most interesting of all, the Mahant of the temple near-by possessed a box containing some papers and other articles once belonging to O'Brien, which had descended to him from his predecessor.

On my return I visited the temple, and for a small consideration managed to acquire these relics. They consisted of the box containing the papers and a heavy metal Light Dragoon helmet of the late eighteenth century, still complete with the badge of the 24th Light Dragoons, a heavy brass-plated chin-strap and the remnants of a horse-hair plume. The box contained a number of white-metal buttons bearing the same number, a copper tobacco-box, some broken pipes, a bundle of letters and a linen-bound parcel, on breaking the seals of which there was discovered a large leather pocket-book fastened with a brass clasp and sealed with tapes.

On examining the papers I found them to be a miscellaneous lot: letters in French from various women, some from comrades, bills, extracts from orders concerning promotions, campaigns, &c., and a record of service. All ended with the year 1810, which would seem to be the year in which O'Brien deserted; and desirous of avoiding the risk of these letters, which had once been precious to a lonely man, falling into profane hands, I destroyed all but the military memoranda.

The pocket-book was wrapped in a soiled and filthy linen cover, and addressed in a stilted and crabbed handwriting to—

"M. Le General
Jean Baptiste Ventura,
Au Service du Maharajah
Ranjit Singh,
Lahore."

And in English—

"To be delivered after my death."

As "M. Le General" and the Maharajah had long since departed this earth, I made no scruple in constituting myself heir to these few remains, and that night Ramsay and myself sat up deciphering this interesting record of a singularly varied and eventful life, the writing of which was as clear as when penned, for the book could not have been opened since the writer's death. On the outer part of the cover was the name "Sergeant C. O'Brien, B Troop, 24th Light Dragoons." The first pages were filled with military memoranda, consisting of the roll of the troop of some sixty men, details of marches, of casualties to men and horses and other notes, all interesting enough after a lapse of time, but not to be compared with the latter

part, which contained the history of the writer.

"I, Cormac O'Brien, formerly of Mallow in the County of Cork, Ireland, sometime Divinity Student, Mate of the British privateer *Good Account*, Sous-Officer of the 20th Chasseurs à Cheval, of the Chasseurs Brittaniques, of the 24th British Light Dragoons, Killadar of Rajankote, and now in the service of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, being old and weary of life, do now write this story of my sinful and stormy life, in the hope that it may be conveyed to my good friend Ventura of the Sikh service, who I pray to convey it to my Brother, Terence O'Brien, if possible, or if he be dead, as may well hap after so many years, to any of his descendants, that they may know of the fate of him who, long forgetting and perhaps in turn forgot, now, like all of us who have wandered far and long, turns his thoughts in the day of mortal illness to the land of his birth and the companions of his youth.

"I pray all to think kindly of one who, though his sins have been grievous and deadly, has, in part, atoned for them by the loss of all he held dear, and by long exile from his own country and the kindly speech and companionship of kindred and countrymen. My after fate I fear not, for if there be truth in the tales of the priests, it can but take me to those whom I have dearly loved and lost. I fear not the future, nor repent even on this my death-bed for having lived my later life without any thought of religion, or the services of a priest; repentance in dread of after punishment would avail me little, and, moreover, be but the action of a coward. But I have long since placed with my good friend, General Ventura, the price of many Masses for the souls of those I have lost, and perchance my own, should the priests consent to pray for the souls of those alien to their religion and mine own as a renegade from their craft.

"I was born in the year 1774, in the town of Mallow in the County of Cork, my parents being farmers in a small way, and I the youngest of five sons. Of these but my elder brother and myself survived, for in early life the others had joined the Irish Brigade in the service of the King of France, and met a fighting death in the Regiment of Dillon. My elder brother had remained to help the old people and to inherit the farm, and I, from my birth, was destined for the priesthood, they desiring to keep me in safety from that outer world to which they had given and lost so many sons.

"To this end my early teaching was directed. But, I fear me, I paid far less attention to the teachings of our pedagogue than to the tales of Thady M'Shane, a veteran of the Irish Brigade, who had long served in Indian and Continental wars, and ever regaled me with never failing

tales of war and adventure in foreign lands. I now doubt me that much of what he narrated was but 'old soldiers' tales,' but to me, a callow youth, they were gospel, making me dread the drab and dreary life that I was destined for. Much and often I protested, but in vain; for, when barely eighteen years of age, I was taken to Maynooth College, where for eighteen weary months I endured its grim discipline, and unwillingly imbibed dreary doctrines from soulless bigots, to whom the spirit of youth, with its longing for life and adventure, was anathema.

"Being permitted to visit my home at the end of this time, I resolved never to return, but fearing the outcry of my parents and the forcible return to the college, I confided only in my good brother Terry, who gave me what money he had, sympathising with me, for he also felt an urge for adventure and a longing for the outer world. But, being the sole support of the old people, and besides having a woman to wife, he had to remain with his longings unsatisfied. I left home very secretly, for which I now reproach myself bitterly, for my parents loved me dearly, and only sought what they thought was my own good. May the earth rest lightly upon them, and may they, ere death, have forgiven one who was then but a simple and thoughtless youth, fired with a wild desire for adventure and a grievous distaste for the priesthood.

"Hastening to Cork, I took passage to London, from whence I purposed to cross over to France and join their army. But no opportunity of passage being available, and having but little money and unable to obtain any employment, I suffered much privation, and was quite destitute when one day, wandering through Wapping, I fell in with a party of boozing sailors belonging to a privateer who were seeking recruits, and, liking my thews and stature, regaled me with good food and strong liquor, and thence to their vessel, then lying in the stream below London Bridge.

"Early next morning the privateer *Good Account* dropped quietly down the river. For months we cruised on the coasts of Spain and France, under our letters of marque, taking many prizes; but we were pirates in all but name, preying upon all nations when opportunity offered, our crew being a polyglot and villainous crowd of all nations, who were most useful when we sailed under foreign colours, to entrap unwary neutrals. A number of them were French, though passing as Jerseymen, and from these I learnt that fluent French which in after years stood me so well in time of need.

"We steered as clear of French privateers as they of us, for wolf may not prey upon wolf, and, being well known to each other, we passed with a courteous greeting. As much did we avoid English war vessels, both by reason of the

pressgang, from which even our letters of marque would not have saved us, but more because we usually had aboard much evidence of the plunder of English ships, that would have sent us to Execution Dock and the gibbets of the mud flats below Woolwich.

"We were pirates by necessity, for the French merchantmen had been driven from the seas. Therefore, our prey was neutral vessels, and occasionally, I now grieve to relate, ships of our own nationality. Mostly we sailed under Dutch or Danish colours, the better to entice other vessels to an unwary approach, putting forward such men to hail and put them off their guard. When no resistance was offered, and our nationality was unsuspected, we let vessel and crew go free, after plundering them of all we required; but if resistance was given, or information feared, we slaughtered and scuttled ruthlessly. Many a ghastly scene did I witness and even take part in bloody deeds, which now lie heavy on my soul, but hot blood knows neither law nor mercy; sometimes hawk and hawk unwarily fought, as when we encountered the *Bon Jacques* of Cherbourg, like ourselves disguised and seeking easy prey. For two hours we fought a bloody battle before discovering our mutual mistake and sheering off, each a battered shambles.

"Three years of this villainous life did we pass, disposing of our plunder in Dutch or Spanish or even American ports. In time I became master gunner, and braved it over all these rascals, for I was now a large and strong man, ever ready for a brawl, and careless of the results. But in the end we met our Nemesis in a French sloop of war, into which we blundered when emerging from a fog off Ushant, with English colours aloft. We fought a most stubborn fight, for the Frenchmen of our crew knew that the gallows awaited them, and we others dreaded a like fate as pirates, or, at best, the horrors of a French prison.

"But we were outmanœuvred and outfought, and in the end towed into Cherbourg, where the Frenchmen of our crew were hanged, and the remainder being given the benefit of the doubt owing to our letters of marque, were sent as prisoners of war to Verdun, where we remained in much misery for six months. Our fate was hard indeed, for the Frenchmen revenged themselves upon us for the cruel treatment of French prisoners in the English hulks.

"By the end of this time we were offered service with the French navy, but declined, for had we been taken aboard a French vessel we should have been doubly condemned as traitors to our own country and as belonging to the crew of the *Good Account*, now posted for piracy. A little later the offer to join the French army was accepted, and being, like

all farm-trained lads, well able to ride, I was posted to the 20th Chasseurs à Chevel, with whom I served against the Russians, the Austrians and then against the British in Holland, obtaining the rank of Fourrier.

"After the war in Holland was decided in favour of the French, my regiment was drafted to Egypt, where, under General Kleber, I saw much fighting. Being dismounted in a charge on the British infantry at the battle of Alexandria, I was taken prisoner, and inadvertently speaking English, was detected as an Irishman, and sentenced to be shot as a deserter from the British who had fought against them. In this case, however, the French I had learnt from Thady M'Shane, and perfected aboard the *Good Account*, served to prove my contention that I was the French-born son of a soldier of the Brigade D'Irlandis, and so I escaped the gallows or the firing party, and was sent to Cairo a prisoner of war.

"Confinement always irked me sorely, and, allegiance to any flag being a matter of little concern, I once again turned my coat and swearing allegiance to the British was drafted to the Chasseurs Brittaniques, a cosmopolitan corps of rascals, mostly deserters or criminals of all nations. With this I served in Sicily, becoming a sergeant, for I was burly and masterful, and it was only such who could command obedience in that collection of scoundrels. Had all who offended grievously against military rule been shot or imprisoned, the regiment would have ceased to exist in a month.

"He who could strike hard and instantly was feared most, and so we did, even though all in authority walked in constant danger of a shot in the rear in action, or a furtive stab in the dark at other times. In the end, tiring of this rascally companionship, though no better myself, I asked for a transfer to the regular British army, and being a cavalryman, was drafted into the 24th Light Dragoons, then serving in Sicily, and with them sailed for India in the year 1802. After seeing much service in Southern India, we were sent farther north, to take part in the wars with the Mahrattas, and after that went into garrison at Meerut.

"Being a good soldier, of wide experience, I had gained promotion to sergeant, but after my adventurous life I had become ill-fitted for the dreary monotony of garrison duty, and to break it found solace in the arrack bottle or the fiery compounds of the bazaar. For some time my repute as a soldier and consequent favour with the officers shielded me from serious trouble, until, being found drunk when in command of the guard, I was brought to a court-martial and sentenced to degradation and six months' imprisonment in irons in a fortress.

"However, before many days, with the connivance of some comrades who were well-versed in jail breaking, I managed to escape from the guard-room and, evading pursuit, made my way to Sardhana, where I secured employment as an officer with the army of Begum Sumru, who was always willing to employ any European of military skill without asking inconvenient questions as to why and whence they came, and employed me in the artillery, for which my privateering experience had qualified me. But 'twas a sorry service, for though there were many Europeans they were but the scum of Europe, or Portuguese half-castes, who soon came to hate me as much as I despised them; and besides, the pay was but a scant Rs. 5 a day.

"Hence I departed for Lahore, but failing to secure employment with Ranjit Singh, passed on to Kangra, where I secured employment with Raja Sunsar Chand of Kangra, on a salary of Rs. 500 a month, to raise, discipline and command 2000 men of all arms. For these I cast guns, and made muskets, swords, equipment and munitions. Here was I at rest at last. I became Colonel O'Brien Sahib, and was given a wife from the Raja's own family, who in time bore me a brave son.

"By order of his Highness, I built a new fort of Rajankote, to command the frontier, and herein made my home, with a strong garrison, the remainder of my troops being cantoned at the foot of the hill whereon my fort was built. For a time life was very fair, but soon the clouds gathered and the storm broke, leaving me shattered, broken, and devoid of wife, child and friends. The Raja's frontier ran with that of the Gurkhas, with whom war was unceasing. Raid and counter-raid followed, though in these I, being an experienced and resolute soldier, was usually successful, and in consequence became as feared as hated by the enemy.

"Accordingly, having made their dispositions, they undertook a feint attack on the Kangra fort, to which having lured me, and all but a scant garrison, they sent a great force to destroy my fort, which I had left in charge of my lieutenant, John Macdonald, and to ambush and destroy me and my force when I should return. But too successful was their scheme, for though I soon found I had been tricked, it was too late, for the Gurkhas had got behind me, stormed the fort and slain all within, except my wife, who, a true Rajput, had killed herself and her son rather than risk dishonour and disgrace. By one who escaped from my cantonment, I learnt what had passed, and that the Gurkhas were lying in wait to ambush me in a pass through which I must return.

"By paths known but to ourselves, we gained a vantage ground above the unsuspecting

enemy who awaited us, and, falling on them, slew many and drove the remainder off in disorder. I gained my fort, to find the interior but a smouldering ruin, from which the bodies of my wife and child and my lieutenant had been rescued by the hillmen, after the retreat of the Gurkhas. Within the fort, which I dismantled and abandoned, I made their last resting-place, and around their graves placed a grim guard of the heads of the many Gurkhas we had slain, thus ensuring an undisturbed rest, for I knew none would venture where such guarded.

"Though many years have passed away, my sentinels have done all that I desired, and the hillmen who occasionally pass near the place aver that the ghosts of the dead keep nightly vigil within and around the walls of my old home. It may be so, for in my frequent pilgrimages to the graves of my loved ones I have felt that the spirits of the dead were whispering around me.

"The Raja desired me to repair and reoccupy the fort, and offered me another wife, both of which offers I refused, for I would tempt fate no more. I still served the Raja, waging relentless war against the Gurkhas, with varying success, and in the year 1814 offered my own services and those of my soldiers to the British; but, though Colonel Ochterlony accepted both, and promised me a free pardon with well paid service, I was kept too long waiting an answer, and when the messenger arrived with the commission my old enemy had overcome me, and I was too drunk to reply. So the opportunity passed!

"When the Kangra fort was betrayed to Ranjit Singh after the death of my employer, I was given command, and attained high favour with Maharajah Ranjit Singh of Lahore. Being now well stricken in years, and with a mortal sickness from which I desire not recovery, for life has lost all savour for me, I write this, the story of a misspent life, in the faint hope that some day it may reach the outer world and my kith and kin, to tell them of the fate of one who, though far distant in an alien land, after many years' separation, still cherishes a dear memory of them. I have besought my friend, the Mahant of Kangra temple, to send this book to General Ventura, and to bury me beside my wife and child and my friends.

"And now, commending my soul to that God I have so long forgotten and forsworn, in the fervent hope that his mercy may unite me to those whom I hold so dear, I await the King of Terrors with a tranquil heart, to obey joyfully that trumpet call that will end the life of that sport of fortune, Cormac O'Brien.

"Written at Kangra Fort in the Himalaya Mountains, in the month of March 1826, as witness my hand CORMAC O'BRIEN."

FIERY FURNACE.

BY LADY MARY BALFOUR.

I WAS staying with 'Pearly' King and his wife Janet in a log cabin on the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains close to the Canadian border. Pearly was a ranger in the U.S. National Forest Service, and his wife was—well, all that a wife should be and a great deal more. In fact they were both quite exceptional people, in spite of the humble circumstances which they shared in common with the rest of the sparse population that inhabits that sylvan country. For instance, Janet could remember seeing her father's ranch in Colorado razed to the ground by marauding bandits from Oklahoma in the name of their particular brand of justice. Subsequently she earned her living by running an hotel in the mining district of Colorado and was familiar with such romantic figures as the original of Owen Wister's Virginian—I will not spoil it by adding what she said about him. And along with this sort of experience Janet managed to develop in an astonishing degree a literary sense that was as natural as it was delightful.

King himself was English. In fact, he was a true Cockney, for he began life as a London guttersnipe, the son of a costermonger, hence his nickname, which was, as Janet said, inevitable. How from that origin he came to be a ranger in the North-West could be told in a series of astounding adventures which — unfortunately— cannot be included in my account of this one. But you see what kind of people they were, and can guess what a thrilling time I had in their company, quite apart from the fascination of my surroundings.

One evening Pearly and I were coming back from inspecting part of his range that had been closed to the public during the fire hazard season owing to the valuable young timber in it. I had my rod with me, as I had been fishing down the river earlier in the day, and before leaving the closed area, Pearly led me to a certain pool and suggested that I should try my luck there.

It was difficult to get at. A few yards higher up the river narrowed, and, pouring through a gorge, tumbled with a roar on to the rocks below. It was one of the loveliest spots on the range and a favourite with the trout, perhaps because this stretch of the river was so often inaccessible to fishermen. Pearly helped to lower me on to a convenient rock, then sat on

the edge above me to watch—and tease. The boy in him was never long absent.

Presently, through the noise of the waterfall, I heard him whistle, and in another second he was beside me.

"What's that?" he shouted in my ear.

Well, I could not see anything: anything, that is, that was difficult to make out. I thought at first Pearly was trying to be funny at the expense of my angling—he was taken that way sometimes. But I was wrong. His long-practised eye had seen something that was definitely unusual.

"I can count thirteen at least," he went on, and, thinking he meant salmon, I expected an exaggerated description of their dimensions to follow. But instead, he waded out into the stream while I secured my line and fly.

When I looked again, Pearly was standing up to his knees, elbows in the stream, fishing for some object with his hands. In a minute he drew from the water a bottle, corked and sealed and apparently full of liquid. Then another followed, and another, till I began to laugh. Propping my rod against the rock face behind me, I waded out to join him, and suggested breaking a bottle to celebrate. But he shook his head, pretending to look shocked, and to my disappointment began putting the bottles carefully back as he had found them.

There seemed little doubt that we had fallen on a rum-runner's dump of Canadian liquor, and if it had not been for what happened the next day, Pearly would have followed up the matter. Not that hunting rum-runners was in his line, but keeping people out of closed areas certainly was.

On the way back we passed a place where a narrow, little-used trail joined our own. It was so much overgrown that it looked like a tunnel running up the hillside through the trees. I asked Pearly where it led to. He laughed and said he would show me. Then, looking at me out of the corners of his eyes, he added, "But, mind you, it is supposed to be haunted up there!"

I followed Pearly up the winding path till he came to a stop ahead of me. Someone was coming down the trail, and it was necessary for one party to step aside to let the other pass. It was we who stepped aside, because the man approaching was dragging something large and heavy behind him. This was a curiously shaped canvas-covered bundle that might have contained anything from a deer carcass to a camouflaged collection of whisky bottles. But the man was even more curious than his bundle. I never saw such a complete-looking ruffian outside a Grimm fairy tale. He looked all the less attractive because of his obvious annoyance at meeting us. He glanced at Pearly's badge of office with a quick look of fear

that was almost comic in its dramatic effect. But the ranger's dignified bearing was just as effective and nearly as startling!

Pearly looked at the man steadily but did not stop him. On the contrary, he said "Good evening" in a friendly voice as if the stranger was a well-known frequenter of his range.

We watched him slouching down the trail up which we had come, his queer baggage leaving a flattened track behind him, till he was out of sight. Then I turned to Pearly and asked all the obvious questions.

Rather to my satisfaction, Pearly knew no more who he was than I did, but presumed he was some shifting hobo whose affairs would not bear the strictest investigation. The country was full of them. Nor did Pearly care to say what might be in the strange bundle. He merely stated that the game season was not yet open. Pearly had inherited all a Cockney's charming ease in intercourse and all an Englishman's maddening reserve that offers neither apology nor excuse.

By now we had reached the end of the trail. It opened on to a small, long-deserted clearing on the steep hillside, whereon stood two or three desolate wooden shacks, their fronts perched on stilts to make them level. They were all in ruins, and presented a pathetically forlorn appearance.

This particular venture had obviously been intended for a chicken farm, as one roofless building was fitted with over a dozen incubators, now rotting to decay. A small fortune must have lain wasting in those machines, and one wondered fearfully what the end had been and how it had come.

It is impossible to describe the grimness of the place. No wonder it was supposed to be haunted. Even Pearly's usually indefatigable spirits were temporarily dashed, and he owned that he did not often come there, as the place depressed him so. We went through each building, but not one showed signs of recent human habitation, even by a hobo, and all were in a despicable condition. Round about the buildings, however, there were unmistakable signs of recent human presence. In one place the ground was stamped flat in a large circle, and radiating from it were many tracks likewise flattened, leading away into the forest. All this, Pearly affirmed in his simple way, was quite new.

Following one of these tracks we came to a patch of valuable young spruces, three of which had been cut down during the last twenty-four hours. The ground round about was littered with trimmings, but the poles thus secured were nowhere to be seen.

Pearly's honest ranger's heart was pained at this violation of Forest Regulations, and he muttered crude and unpoetic threats against the unknown culprit.

We returned to the centre and followed another path. It was getting dark by now, and the timber on either side was unusually thick. I was peering into this warily when Pearly suggested with some bluntness that I should look where I was going. He backed up his suggestion with a strong hand. Just ahead of us was a frail log bridge, swung athwart a narrow but very steep creek. It was not an unusual sight in itself, but Pearly's trained eye had detected an unusual feature. Beneath the twigs and needles that lay strewn on them, every log of the bridge was nearly sawn through on the underside. The work was quite fresh, and nothing much heavier than a cat could have crossed in safety.

Pearly grunted. "That needn't stop us!" was all he said.

Fortunately a tree had fallen across the creek a little lower down, and though it was slender, such crossings were nothing to a ranger, and even I, accustomed as I was to Pearly's ways, faced it with equanimity.

When we had regained the trail on the other side we followed it for perhaps fifty yards, when Pearly side-tracked, and pushing through some undergrowth came to a full stop. I heard him exclaim "Tch! tch!" as if talking to a bad child. There, at our feet, was a large square hole partly covered with fresh branches, supported on three young spruce poles that had first been laid across.

The hole was pitch dark, and appeared to be empty. But by striking a match and reflecting the light off a knife-blade we could see, on the surface of the earth floor, a number of cylindrical impressions, as though rows of bottles had once lain there. In one corner lay two revolvers in their holsters and a box of cartridges. Whoever the author of all these operations might be, he was evidently not desiring visitors.

I glanced at Pearly as he stood up, blew out the match and put it in his pocket, forest fashion. I could not help noticing that, as usual, he had not bothered to carry his own revolver. As he turned to go he remarked that, if we did not hurry, we should be late for supper.

The remark was revealing, because we were invariably late for every meal, and Pearly was never the one to point out the fact.

It was a relief to be back at the ranger station: to be met first by Tags, that sleek bundle of jealous and loyal puppyhood; then by Janet with a basket of berries on her arm, followed by Leo the cat, tail very erect, treading daintily. There was something more endearingly familiar than ever about the little log hut, with its furniture made of packing-cases; its log-wood fire blazing away and keeping our cocoa hot; the old fibre suit-

case that was my wardrobe, serving as a dump-all table; Pearly's maps and other ranger equipment, in which two of Leo's kittens gambolled in unrestricted freedom; the sink, in and out of which a tapped mountain stream trickled ceaselessly; and the kitchen, where Janet performed her casual cooking operations at any old hour when it suited our triple convenience. It had all the charm of a caravan existence without the bother of moving on.

Outside, the forest stretched upwards in all directions save where the ground fell away to the river, only to rise again on the other side. Over the tree-tops to the west, a few peaks, rearing their heads above the timber line, were all that indicated a vista beyond which might be something else.

We spent that evening much the same as usual, talking a deal of nonsense, having the same arguments over cleaning my trout, lighting the petrol lamp and playing crap. Janet sat very straight and splendid, quietly humorous, ever skilful with her everlastingly boyish husband.

But as I lay in my cot on the porch that night, staring out into the darkness of the forest, I found with curious annoyance that I was still haunted by our evening's adventure. At my feet the warm supple body of Tags lay asleep, exacting a little more than his share of the bed. I envied him.

Of course we had told Janet all about it, and by breakfast next morning we were treating the whole thing as a joke, till other and more important matters dismissed it altogether from our minds for a time. Bill, one of the Forest Firewardens and our chief news agent, had told Janet during his call the day before that the fire situation was getting worse. The humidity had dropped to 16, and campers were being called in and told to leave. The logging companies had been closed down all the week.

When Pearly reported to the district office on his return, we learnt that a 'regular fire' had broken out in a neighbouring valley and absorbed all the available foresters, and they would be hard put to it to raise fighters for any new fire.

Next morning neither Janet nor I accompanied Pearly on his run, for we had plans for a mountaineering expedition in the afternoon. He used to take the old Ford truck as far as he could push it along the main trail and then walk. His range was a little one of some 13,000 acres!

Janet and I cleaned up and put some water on to heat for washing the dishes; the while we discussed great matters, so that we would stand sometimes for several minutes, clutching a kettle or a half-peeled potato, forgetting entirely what we were going to do with it. On the rare days when we stayed at home to do house-work, we invariably acted in this manner,

and it would not be worth mentioning here if it had not been stamped on my memory later as belonging to something like a previous existence.

We had redrawn the 18th Amendment, and were deep in a discussion of human relationships, when Pearly buzzed in and, without switching off his engine, ran to the woodshed, grabbed up some tools, shouted to Janet to report a fire "down by those old chicken buildings," leapt into the car again and was gone, Tags racing madly after him.

My heart seemed to miss a beat.

Till then fires had only broken out on other fellows' ranges. Pearly was justly proud of the immunity of his. Besides, a fire on Pearly's range was unthinkable! I had grown to love every crag and tree and trail, every trail that is except one, and that one was where . . .

Janet had picked up the receiver. Her voice was so steady she might have been ordering groceries from Hal's store down on the highway eight miles off. Not getting the district office immediately, she called the Emergency Patrol. While talking to them the head office came on the line. After Janet had given her report, I almost fancied I could hear a sigh of weariness from the other end.

At the end of twenty minutes a car swung in, came to a stop, and out of it sprang a Forestry Supervisor. He nodded a greeting and asked leave to use the telephone. He looked shockingly tired.

He stood there for nearly half an hour, patiently calling up the various logging companies for more tools and more men. Men he must have; the fire had jumped in two places, and was heading for the big timber. It was obvious he was also organising a camp concentration at the station. He asked Janet if she could feed six men. We discussed in undertones what bedding we could raise if these officers required it. I wondered if they ever found time to lie down.

By now a fresh smoke cloud was being added to the smoke-laden air. It seemed to be advancing from one direction like a huge tidal bore. We ran out to watch, awed, yet fascinated. Cracklings were beginning to be audible, followed almost immediately by a roar that swelled to a crescendo so quickly that one's senses could not follow, and panic shook us to the core. Figuratively we dropped to our knees. I do not know why we did not do so physically. Janet said afterwards it must have been because the porch post held us up as we leant against it.

The roar increased—if that were possible—and a quick "My God!" came from the lips of the lean lithe-bodied supervisor at the telephone behind us.

Scarcely an hour had passed since Pearly had come and gone, leaving us with his fateful

message, and now the flames were leaping up the hillside opposite, a few hundred yards away. Columns of smoke billowed, boiled, turned and twisted first this way then that. A breeze had started; also the fire had by this time created a strong draught of its own.

Our world had changed. Even we three scarcely seemed to see each other. We had been plunged into a chaotic frightfulness that absorbed our minds and energies. Looking back on this part of the experience I see only a kaleidoscopic panorama of scenes that refuse to be sorted out.

Twigs, big and small pieces of bark, shakes from those old buildings, were drawn up into the air to float about, being caught by one current then another, and soon the whole sky was hidden. We were enveloped in smoke. Stuff was dropping all round about us. Then, across the river not so far away, the first 'spot' fire caught. The breeze grew stronger. Men were gradually concentrating at the station. The big fire tank from some fifteen miles up another valley came rolling in eventually. Suddenly the wind veered, and the near visibility improved as the smoke was pushed up the hillside.

By this time the fire down the river was plainly visible. There were not one but two fires now, one on each side of the river. It did not seem possible that the little log station could escape. However, the concentration went steadily forward.

A truck rolled in with provisions; another with more men. A few slim poles were brought in, a place dug out in the ground, which became a stove, and a big canvas appeared. The camp was started.

One was torn between conflicting emotions. That beautiful hillside—our lovely valley—how it hurt personally. Also it hurt to see what these men had to stand up to and take. What if the fire had been started wilfully? The thought had, I knew, been in all our minds, though we had not mentioned it. A sudden storm of bitterness overtook me as I visualised the strange place where the fire had started. If that hobo had had a selfish reason, a desire to hide something . . . ?

The wind, as evening fell, fortunately died out. The District Ranger arrived and scattered the men to see how far-reaching the fire had become. As he stepped into the cabin, the little group collected there made way as for the chief mourner at a funeral. His face was grave and taut. He remarked that this was the most important valley on account of the young growth. As he spoke there was a rustle across the road and a cruel bright flame shot up—one more of those lovely soft young trees had gone.

As night came on the camp filled. The 'rush' was to be made in the morning just as

soon as they could see. Men were lined up to the number of 200 from various logging companies and places. Janet and I got supper for some of the officers, but time passed and no one came for it. No one seemed to be paying attention to eating.

About 9.30 Pearly came in and suggested that Janet and I should go with him to fetch two or three men and their bedding that had been collected together at the fish hatcheries. We jumped at this diversion, and crammed into the front of the little truck, Tags insisting on making a fourth. It was safer to take him, for he had been expressing his intense disapproval of the whole affair in a manner that made us fear for his life among the already sorely tried fire-fighters.

We said little as we went along. There was a sternness in Pearly's face that was new to me. Now and then he pointed to some work of devastation that had already been achieved as a check to the monster — areas 'trailed' at high speed.

When we arrived at the fish hatcheries, Pearly jumped out and disappeared in search of the men he had come to collect, while Janet and I loaded the truck with a pile of bedding that lay rolled up waiting for us. We were quickly joined by one of the new fighters. He was a scaler from one of the logging companies who had volunteered his services. It was his first experience of forest fire work, and excitement was his chief emotion. I wondered drily if he would enjoy it. He looked no more than nineteen, with an enthusiastic small-boy face. He was a nice lad, and we sat there chatting till the rest of our party collected. Two others were fish hatchery men, and at length Pearly came back accompanied by the last person in the world we expected to see—the hobo, in fact, of our last night's adventure.

"It's the wild man of the woods!" I whispered to Janet, and she narrowed her eyes upon him without altering her position.

The two we were watching had obviously been having an argument, though they were not talking when they came up. But I was only once more to see Pearly's eyes as angry as they were at that moment.

The ugly-looking customer at his side was clearly unwilling to accompany us, but though he looked sullen he climbed on to the back, submissive enough, and sat, in curious contrast to the good-looking young scaler beside him, glaring sourly at the rough road as it rolled away beneath us giddily. I think Pearly was expending some of his feelings on the accelerator.

On returning to the Ranger Station our consignment was rapidly absorbed by the camp, now in darkness, save for the lanterns that dotted it with will-o'-the-wisps and the light

from the hillside that flung an intermittent glow of red over all. Poor Pearly had to dash off again immediately to make some arrangement with the motor stages about conveying seventy-five men who were being sent up through some agency in town. As if in a dream I watched men crowd into the mess tent, grab a bag and wander off to drop down on the grass to sleep.

Close on midnight Janet and I turned in on her cot, meaning to get a little sleep. But it was too difficult. The scene outside was awesome. The roaring was farther away now and the hisses more isolated, but there was light enough round about to read by. The lower parts of the hills were grey, with here and there a broad patch of flame, but for the most part you saw individual burning snags — snags holding their lights proudly on high. As we watched some group of snags wasting gradually, a fine spray of wonderful sparks, like Roman candles, would be showered all round. At other times a flame shooting up like a tongue would bring a whole tree into relief; every needle would stand out red-hot, then curl in twisted agony before succumbing. The immensity of it all stupefied us as we sat huddled up, watching.

On the porch we could hear now and then one or other of the officials sitting down wearily. Presumably they wanted to go to bed, but we would soon hear them get up and move off again. We only once heard Pearly's voice all night—two minutes' hurried talk with his district officer, then silence. We listened intently, hearing nothing; nothing but a regular flop-flop that puzzled us till Janet remembered the bundles of Government blankets that had been packed with moth powder. Ill-suppressed exclamations reached us, followed by explosions from Tags and a "Kill that . . . dog!" from here and there.

We sat on, clutching each other, sobbing with weak laughter at these and other small things.

Below our window some men seemed to remain awake all night coughing. Perhaps they had been badly gassed by the smoke earlier in the day. We wondered about the hobo, whether he was sleeping.

A harsh clanging suddenly overpowered all other sounds. It was the 'rising bell' being pounded on a railroad iron. Four o'clock! The pounding kept up for several minutes accompanied by groans and bitter imprecations; when it ceased we could hear the water faucet pouring as some of the men washed. An argument arose, backed up by bad language and laughter. It grew till curiosity was excited, and we had to come out on the porch to look. Some half-dozen loggers had hold of the surly stranger, and were scrubbing his bare shoulders under the tap. His apology for a shirt dangled at arm's-

length from another man's finger and thumb. Their victim had no doubt been a lousy bed-fellow, and we did not blame them. Tags was barking himself hoarse and adding to the din, rushing at the bullied wretch, then shying off as someone coaxed him to further effort.

This group was interrupted and scattered by a big truck rumbling in. Some rushed to their tents, others grabbed food. The hobo picked up his shirt morosely and shambled off, the whites of his eyes glittering.

A shout went up for "Buckers!" No response to this. Axemen were next called for, and there was a fair response.

The truck filled—it held between forty and fifty men—then rolled away in the dim light. Three other trucks backed in and were quickly filled. A smaller truck came next and took longer to fill; they seemed to be wanting only certain types in it.

Finally, only a few men were left. Pearly appeared, and told them to get into his little flivver. They did so, all but two men, who suddenly dived into a tent and hauled out the unwilling tramp. Between them they dumped his protesting body on to the lorry, and Pearly drove off, smiling grimly.

Somehow the day dragged through, much as yesterday had done. We had food and hot drinks always ready for the officials, but few came in for them. The District Ranger sat down for a few minutes on the porch cot, his head in his hands, his face grey with fatigue.

We asked him if he thought most of it had been due to 'spot' fires—new fires, that is, set alight by sparks from old fires. He said they had a fear this one had not been a 'spot' fire. Morally certain. Some evidence. Not enough, though. He was cryptic and did not enlarge.

A short time after this Pearly came in and asked Janet to see to his left shoulder. His face was leaden. She took him into their little bedroom, and a moment later came out and told me to get a basin of warm water while she found some linen and other things.

It was an ugly place. Pearly said a piece of falling timber had caught him. But it was an odd wound to be inflicted that way. "More like a falling axe!" was Janet's indignant comment. Fortunately, whatever it was, it had glanced off sideways, and the shoulder-bone was not broken. Nevertheless it would cripple him for some time. One way and another there had been three or four casualties, he said.

As we attended to him I could not help asking Pearly if the hobo was any use. He glanced round at me quickly with something of his old fun showing through a pain-stricken face.

"Not much," he admitted, adding significantly, "He's too

careless—of other people. But the men are seeing that he does his share."

I wondered how they saw to this.

There was, of course, no sense in Pearly going off with his shoulder like that, but Janet said it was war time, and therefore there was no sense in anything, so what was the use of worrying? All the same I saw her watching his disappearing figure anxiously.

It seemed hours before we saw Pearly again. The fire in our immediate vicinity had consumed all but a fringe of trees by the roadside. It was still gnawing away at the bare bones of its prey, unremittingly, but less greedily. All that had been such exquisite beauty was not. Even the terrible beauty of the fire was dying, and the once unsullied turf clearing round the cabin was sordid and stained with the unlovely traces of gregarious human occupation. The air was heavy and acrid with smoke; one's nose and throat were troublesome, one's eyes smarting with pain, and these were discomforts to which one became less rather than more accustomed.

To our exhausted senses, the tragedy that occurred about six that evening only seemed to be a final cog fitting into the wheel of frightfulness.

We were startled by two shots, fired in quick succession, up on the dull red hillside to the east. Then came a long period in which nothing else unusual happened. But at the end of that time the lights of Pearly's car came round the bend, ominously slow I thought, and drew up close to the cabin porch. Pearly jumped out, his left cheek very bloody. Only once before had I seen the same angry expression on his face. In the back of the car, propped between two loggers, someone was lying more seriously hurt. They carried him in. It was the young scaler who had been so excited to take part in his 'first experience' of a forest fire. He was conscious, but one wished he was not. His jaw was half shot away.

Pearly explained afterwards how they had missed the hobo for some time, till without warning he had come on them with two revolvers in his hands. He was raging drunk, and shouting imprecations at the top of his voice. He made for Pearly, and both his guns went off. Whence he had obtained them no one knew, though three of us could guess. Pearly was only the poorer by an earlobe, but the other bullet caught the young scaler in the head. They rushed the madman then and disarmed him. But he fought like a crazed being, and got away, screaming. They shouted at him instinctively to keep away from the fire line, but he was past attending; and as if his end had been predetermined, a tall 'widow-maker,' the burning shell of a mighty four-century-old forest

giant, fell right across his path as he ran. It had not even been possible to extricate his body.

There is really little more to tell. The young scaler was taken to hospital, and eventually recovered. The fire-fighting dragged on for over a week more, the camp being shifted as was necessary. The aftermath for us was drab to an indescribable degree, and the devastation of our lovely valley haunts me yet.

Just this in conclusion: before I left to return to England the three of us made a round of the old haunts I loved best on the range. Some were gone for good, many were changed, but a few had escaped the marauder's pillage altogether. One of these was the waterfall, described in the beginning of this account. We spent a blissful afternoon there, trying to blot out all that had happened since we had seen it last.

"Let's pretend," I suggested in a moment of folly, "that we have jumped back to that afternoon."

"In that case . . ." said Pearly, peering down into the water below us.

He never finished his sentence, though we all knew what was in his mind, for there beneath the crystal water we could see the bottles just as Pearly had left them.

Scorning assistance — his shoulder still gave him a good deal of trouble—Pearly let himself down over the edge, dropped on to a shelf by the water and waded out. Janet and I watched him without a word. He lifted one bottle and deliberately cracked off the neck against a rock. It broke badly, and most of the liquid was spilt over his hand. He held his fingers to his nose, but no change in his expression told us the result of this experiment. Chucking the broken bottle into the great pool that lay just beyond him, he stooped and searched for another. Having found it, he took it by the neck and hurled it with all his might into the face of the waterfall. It was a marvel how he managed it with that shoulder.

We watched him do this with twenty-four bottles till the exertion unstuck the look of strain that his face had come to wear permanently of late.

I could have wished there had been a loud report as each bottle hit destruction, but neither sound nor sign gave evidence of their fate. The waters just consumed them without protest or acclamation.

LETTERS OF A MASTER MARINER.

BY WESTON MARTYR.

s.s. *Spartan*,
Buenos Ayres, *Oct. 3rd*, 1903.

My dear Wife,—The orders came this morning. We are to load a full cargo of grain for discharge at either Antwerp, Rotterdam or *Liverpool*. So I may actually be at Home with you and the children within a month! There is one chance in three of this at any rate, and I am grateful for this chance after our long separation. I have just been reckoning it up in the Log. It is 21 months and 3 days since I saw you standing on the Liverpool dockhead, waving good-bye to me in the rain, with Little Bess hanging on to your hand and waving too. When the ship moved out into the stream the drizzle soon hid you, but in spite of the long time and the great distance, I have seen you both standing there like that ever since. So now I thank God for the chance of seeing you and my Little Bess again—*and* my son. I cannot get over our son yet, Bessie. It must feel queer, I think, for any man when he gets a son; but to have a son a year old like me, and never to have seen him is . . . well, as I say, it is a queer feeling. But that will soon be altered, let us hope. Hope and pray. I am not what they call a religious man by any means, as you know well enough; but I prayed this morning. I was in my cabin when the Agents' clerk brought the orders aboard. He left me a copy of the Owners' cable, and I sat there with it in my hand for a bit, thinking of this chance to see you at last. The Homeward freight market is in a bad way here just now. The *Trojan*, another of this Company's ships, sailed from here yesterday in ballast for Newcastle, N.S.W. She has been lying here four weeks, waiting for a charter. She is to load coal at Newcastle for 3 ports West Coast S.A., and thence with nitrates to Yokohama. Now that is a long round, and I was more than expecting to get orders for a similar voyage. But there were my orders in my hand, "A full cargo of grain in bulk, one port of discharge, optional, Antwerp, Rotterdam or Liverpool." Liverpool! But a 2 to 1 chance against it. And when I thought of the ship discharging at Antwerp or Rotterdam and loading out again from there to the Lord knows where for another long voyage I could not stand it. I could not stand the thought. And it was then I prayed. I shut my cabin door and prayed to God to send us to Liverpool. Then the Mate came in, with me there on my knees. I pretended I was looking for my

shore-going boots under the settee. Now you see, my dear, the poor sort of man you have for a husband.

I must finish this and look after the ship. They are loading the grain into us from 2 elevators at the rate of 10 tons a minute, and I must keep a sharp watch on the ship's trim. We should sail on the 5th for Las Palmas for bunkers, and I shall get my orders there about the port of discharge. I shall not cable you, because of the expense, but I am writing to the Head Office in Cardiff for them to advise you of the ship's movements. We should be arriving about the 5th Nov. Pull hard on the strings, Bessie. Pull us Home to Liverpool. Give my love to Little Bess and the baby.

Your loving husband,

M. EDWARDS, *Master.*

Just look at that! That is a fine way for a man to sign a letter to his sweetheart. It is because I have been signing so many ship's papers to-day, I suppose.

Your loving

MARK. (That's better!)

s.s. *Spartan*,
LAS PALMAS, *Oct. 26th*, 1903.

MY DEAR WIFE,—We arrived this morning, are now bunkering and sail in an hour. My dear, the orders are to discharge at Antwerp. I do not know what to say. It is *hard* luck. We may come to the U.K. to load after Antwerp, but I do not know. We can only hope. It seems it is no good praying. I have just done what I now think is a foolish thing. I was trying to think if by any means we could scrape up the money for you to join me in Antwerp. The return fare from Liverpool is pretty heavy, I expect, and you would have to try and find someone to leave the children with. (My poor Little Bess. Tell her I have a real Jap doll for her.) Then there is the cost of the Hotel, because the Company's rules do not allow Masters' wives living on board their ships. And my princely pay of £18 a month will not run to it, I am afraid. I know you can put nothing by from your weekly allotment of £3, 10s., with the children and everything. And, try how I will, it is hard to make ends meet on the £1 a week I keep for myself, even if I do get my food and board on the ship. I have to spend money and make myself pleasant when ashore with the Agents, as it would not do if they took a dislike to me and got me a black mark with the Owners perhaps. Well, as I was saying, I was thinking how we could manage to get you to Antwerp and was giving the idea up as a bad job, when the Dago chap who is supplying our bunker coals here came into my cabin. He shut the door and shuffled about a bit, and then he came to business. We are taking 260 tons of bunkers here, and his scheme was to load 250, me to sign a receipt for the whole 260. He offered me £10. He had the

sovereigns in his hand, and he tried to slide them into mine, the oily thief. Before I knew what I was doing I kicked him out of my cabin. And now I am very sorry. It would have been robbing my Owners; but that £10 would have brought you to Antwerp, and now I have robbed you of your husband and Little Bess and the baby of their Father for another year or more perhaps.

They have finished bunkering, by the sound of things outside, and I must go and see the Chief Engineer and see we have got all our coal. The shore sharks are up to all sorts of tricks in these coaling ports, and it is always a job to make sure we get what we pay for. Give my love to the children, and remember things may not be so bad as they look. There is always the hope we may come Home from Antwerp to load. The ship should be getting near Antwerp about the time you get this. We had a rough passage coming here. Grain shifted and ship took a list. Here is the Agent with the ship's papers. All my love to you and the children.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

s.s. *Spartan*,
ANTWERP, *Nov. 4th*, 1903.

MY DEAR WIFE,—We arrived here yesterday after a quick passage and fine weather, which was lucky. We got to Las Palmas with the cargo shifted and the ship with a dangerous list, and the coal we took aboard there only made the list worse. I had trouble with the hands. The ship was not safe, they said, and they wanted the grain trimmed before they would sail. The Las Palmas Agents were not much help. They talked of the cost of trimming and the delay to the ship, but that if in my opinion she was not seaworthy, they would get the work done. It was up to me, as usual, and the Master who delays his ship and runs the Owners into expense may very likely get the sack. So I took the ship to sea. I had trouble with the men, of course, but I stopped that. I took a risk with the ship, but I preferred that to the chance of losing my job. I was wrong to do it, some would say, but let them put themselves in my place, I say, before they talk too loud. Well, we got here all well, and when we had berthed the ship I said to myself, that is all over and done with, thank God. Young Mr Jenkin, the Owner's son, is over here from Cardiff to meet the ship. There is some business going on about a time charter for her with the Hamburger-Lloyd. And the first thing he said to me was how he had heard of me trying to run the ship into a lot of needless expense at Las Palmas. This was a pity, because I had about made up my mind to ask him for you to be allowed to come and live aboard the ship here, but after the telling off I got it was not a good time to ask for a favour. So it looks as if we can not see each

other yet. When our grain is discharged the talk is of our going to Hamburg to load for the Hamburger-Lloyd for their Far East Line. But I do not know for sure yet, and I hope this charter will not come off, as the ship is not suitable for that trade, to say nothing of another 6 months or more away from Home. We may come Home yet from here and load coals out of Wales. I hope so for both our sakes. Tell Little Bess I am not sending her doll from here by post, because I still hope to give it to her myself and get a kiss for payment. That is if she is not afraid of being kissed by a strange man. For I have just thought that that is what her Father will be to her after all this long time. It is a hard thought. I could not bear for her to turn away from me. And you, too, Bessie. Soon I will be a stranger to you, too, if I do not look out. But what can I do? I could throw up this job and come Home. But then, if I did not get another job quick, we should starve, all the lot of us, and Masters' jobs are not to be got for asking nowadays. I should be lucky if I got a 2nd Mate's berth at £8 a month. So that will not do. It is a crime for a sailor to have a wife and children. By God, it is a Crime, Bessie, my dear wife.

Nov. 5th. It was too late to post this letter yesterday, and it is just as well, because I got yours this morning. I understand all right, my dear. It is not that we cannot afford for you to come here to me, it is that we have just not got the money. You know what I would give to have you here, but you are quite right, and it would not be right to leave Little Bess and the baby with some stranger. So we must try and put up with it—and for another long spell now, Bessie. Because we are not coming Home this voyage. It was settled this morning. The Hamburger-Lloyd have chartered us for a round trip to China and Japan. As soon as our grain is out we go into dry dock here for painting. Then we proceed to Hamburg to load a general cargo for The Straights, Shanghai, Hongkong, Kobe and Yokohama. So it can not be helped. There is nothing to do but to make up our minds to 6 months more of separation. We must try and bear it. As I see it, this is going to be a worrying voyage. The ship is not up to the new job, and I am wondering if your husband is up to the job either. You see, all my time in Command has been spent in tramp steamers like this old *Spartan*, where we just dump a bulk cargo of coal or grain or sugar or whatever it is into the ship until she is full, making our passages at the most economical speed, and discharging when we happen to arrive. But this cargo-liner business we are chartered for is a very different thing. We have to load and discharge to advertised dates, and run between ports on a time schedule. I

have got a copy of the H.L. voyage schedule, and it is my belief the ship can not keep to it. We are scheduled to leave Hamburg on the 25th Nov., arriving Yokohama 25th Jan. It means pushing the ship hard every minute the whole passage out, and I doubt if we can make her do it. Then there is the job of stowing a mixed cargo for 5 or 6 ports in this ship. She is not fit for it, with her 4 lower holds and single 'tween decks only. The H.L. regular boats have 5 and 6 holds with 2 'tween decks in each, but even they have a job not to over-stow, and this with a crowd of officers aboard who are experienced at the job. With only 2 Officers here and little choice of stowage space, I can see us loading, say, chemicals for Yokohama on top of cotton piece goods for Singapore, if we don't keep a sharp look-out. Over-stowing like that would mean shifting cargo later on, which would cost the Owners money. It means damaged cargo, too, which would mean the sack for me. There are other things, too, but I will not worry you with all that. They are my worries, and to tackle them is what I am paid for. I did not mean to write of these things to you, but somehow they fill my mind and they have leaked out a bit. And writing about them to you, Bessie, seems somehow to have eased my mind a lot. I have packed up Little Bess's Jap doll and will post if off this mail. Talk to her about her Father often, Bessie. Don't let her forget me.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

s.s. *Spartan*,
ANTWERP, *Nov.* 11*th*.

MY DEAR BESSIE,—I am glad to hear Little Bess has taken to the doll as it will help to keep me in her mind a bit. I am more than thankful you thought to give young Mark a present from his Father too. It would be too bad for him to think I forgot him. Of course I did not, but I thought of him somehow as a baby in arms still. And here is my son, nearly a man, with a birthday astern of him already! I will not see him now as a baby. I wonder when I will see him. You are a good woman to take the bad news in my last like you have. Some women would blame me for what I can not help. That would have been too bad. But not you. You are all right, my dear. And that makes it all the harder my not being able to see you, which does not seem fair. We finished discharge and shifted into dry dock to-day. The ship needs a lot of work done on her, but I do not know if she will get it. We are in dock for bottom cleaning and painting, and a new propeller blade in place of the one we knocked the tip off in Durban three voyages back, but we want a deal more done than that if the ship is to run to time this voyage. She will have to average 12 knots,

which is her top speed at the best. I nearly got myself into trouble with young Mr Jenkin this very day. There is a lot of new cargo gear I see we must have if we are to get the despatch in port which the H.L. schedule calls for. Wire derrick spans with rope purchases, for one thing, instead of the old style chain spans we have now. There are a lot more things which should be done, and I had a list of them as long as my arm. I had the Chief Engineer's list, too, and it was longer than mine. When I showed the lists to Mr Jenkin he got in a rare state. I wish old Mr Jenkin was here instead of his son. He said the repairs we asked for would cost over £1000, to say nothing of the alterations and new gear. I explained how we would have to press the ship a lot harder on this charter than she had been driven before, and that, unless the work the Chief and I asked for was done on her, I did not see how she could possibly run to time. Young J. said she had got to run to time, that he had agreed in the charter-party she would do it, under penalty if she did not. He said the Germans were strict on that point, and how, if she ran behind time, they might cancel the charter. That would mean the loss of a lot of money to Jenkin & Co., you see. I said I would not like to guarantee keeping time unless the repairs were done. And what do you think he told me then? Young Mr J. is a hard man, and I wish the Old Man had come over instead. Well, he said, "If you can't do it, Captain, we'll put a man in your place who can." I said then I would do it, and so now I must do it. It will be a hard job. I had more trouble when I told the Chief about what young J. had said. Old Mackenzie was angry, I can tell you, and I had a hard time to stop him from running out and telling Mr Jenkin what he thought of him. He was all for calling him a dirty, mean, clinker-eating little Welshman, so it is just as well for Mrs Mackenzie that I managed to cool old Mac down. It was just as well for me, too, because if anybody can press this ship to get 12 knots average out of her, it is the old Chief who has been in her now for 9 years. It is time I turned in and got some sleep instead of worrying you with my troubles. It is only that I have to think well over these things so as not to make any false steps, and I find writing to you about them helps me. So do not let them worry you. I shall surely get through all right.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

HAMBURG 18*th Nov.* 1903.

MY DEAR WIFE, — They rushed us out of dock in a hurry as the Germans wanted us here to load at once. They are loading us day and night, but are using the shore cranes, I am glad to say, as our old winches and derricks would

not stand up to the racket, I know. They are rushing 600 to 700 tons into us each day. It is all heavy cargo so far, I am glad to say, so that we can get the weight low down in the ship, but the stowage of it is a Chinese puzzle. We get bundles of steel bars, coils of wire, crates of corrugated iron sheeting, kegs of nails and suchlike stuff. There is some 2000 tons of this to come, they say, before we begin with the lighter cargo. But our trouble is, it is all split up into small consignments of 20 to 100 tons or so, with different marks for each lot. There are very many different consignments for each port of discharge, and there are 6 ports of discharge. Each lot has to be kept separate, and the cargo for each port has to be kept separate too. If they would send down the cargo for Yokohama first, and then the Kobe cargo and so on, with the stuff for the first discharging port going into us last of all, it would not be so bad. But they do not. It comes all anyhow, so we have to keep on the jump all day and all night, in case they stow Kobe cargo, say, on top of stuff for Shanghai. If this happened there would be the loss of time in Shanghai, and the expense of shifting the Kobe cargo off the top of the Shanghai stuff. So you see, with only two officers to attend to all this, we are kept busy. Young Harrison, the Mate, is a good officer, but he has not much experience of this kind of thing, and this morning he got rattled and wanted to give in. He asked me to pay him off. The man was white as a sheet. He said he was snowed under by the rate the cargo was coming aboard, and it was impossible for him to keep the run of things. He said the H.L. boats carry 4 Mates for the job, and that he could not do 4 men's work. He said he was sick of it. I had a job with him. It would not do if he left, as I do not know what sort of a Mate I could pick up here. However, I fixed him up. I told him to take charge of the 2 forward holds only, and not to bother himself about the after end of the ship. So he got down to it again. This means extra work for me, keeping my eye on the stowage in the 2 after holds, because I cannot trust Fisher, my 2nd Mate, not to make a mess of things. He was Master of the *Memnon* when she hit the beach in a fog off Father Point, and is an old man now. He has never had a command since. I had my worries with him last voyage. It is an awkward job having a 2nd Mate who was commanding big passenger ships when I was only serving my apprenticeship. He cannot forget that, and it makes him hard to get along with. This voyage I do not see how he is going to be much help, and I think I am going to need all the help I can get. I know I ought to get rid of old Fisher here, but I can not bring myself to do it. This is a weakness, but if I sack him he will not get another berth, and his wife

is old enough to be my Mother. So I shall have to put up with it. No letter from you, but, of course, you would write to me to Antwerp, and the ship's mail has not been sent on from there yet. It may come to-morrow, so I shall hold this up for a bit.

Nov. 20th. I got your letter this morning. It is no use grieving, my dear. We have just got to take what comes. You look up the name of this ship in the dictionary, it explains what I mean. Spartans is what you and I have got to try and be. Do not think I do not understand. It must be harder for you than for me. It is easy for me to talk, because I have got my work to do, and that helps to keep me from thinking. There is plenty of work here, and I am thankful for it. Young Harrison is growling again about all the work. He says he gets no time to sleep, let alone time to himself, but when I tell him he ought to be thankful for that he does not understand. He thinks I am no more than a slave driver, I know. Well, slave driving it is to make sure our cargo gets properly stowed. I got down No. 4 'tween deck last night and found the stevedores stowing some kegs of dyestuffs alongside bales of cotton piece goods. There was a fine row when I told them to shift the kegs, but I made them shift them, as there might have been a lot of damage done to the cotton bales before the voyage was over, if I hadn't gone down the hold just then. The 2nd Mate should have been seeing to this, but he is not so spry as he was once, and it is hard work for an old man climbing up and down those hold ladders and dodging the slings of cargo. But I told Fisher he ought to have seen what the stevedores were up to with those kegs of dyes. He said to the Mate at breakfast to-day that he had been stowing general cargoes when Masters he knew were still sucking titty-bottles. That was meant for me. Fisher is past his job, I fear, and I am wondering if I am doing my duty by the Owners by keeping him on here. But I mean to keep him on if I can.

We are loading now mostly crates of paper, cases of glass and bales of wood-pulp. The pulp comes from the Baltic, and some consignments have been trans-shipped twice, so a lot of the bales are damaged, and we have to keep a sharp look-out we do not give a clean receipt for them. One lot of 300 bales was in very bad condition. From the look of it, it had been stowed on deck somewhere and had got wet. I signed the Ship's Receipt for it, "All bales more or less stained and damaged," and then the Shipper himself came aboard and tried to bribe me to give him a clean Receipt. I may have been a bit short with him, I expect, but the beggar actually went up to the H.L. Office and made a complaint against me. He gave them a whole lot of lies, of course, but I had a hard job to

clear myself, and I do not think I have put myself right with the office people yet, because this man is a big and regular shipper by their steamers, and I do not like to think what will happen if it comes down to a question of them losing his shipments or getting rid of me. When I think that, by taking his money, I might have saved myself all this worry and trouble, it makes me wonder if I am a fool. Well, there is one comfort. We shall be at sea again in 5 days now. We get our troubles there, too, of course; but they are clean troubles, if you understand me. You know what to do if you have to tackle a gale of wind; but, on shore, there is a lot of dirty underhand work going on all the time, it seems to me, and it puzzles a man to know how to keep himself clear of it. I will close this now. It is late and they are still working cargo and I must see it goes right. I send all love to you and the children.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

s.s. *Spartan*,
HAMBURG, *Nov. 24th.*

MY DEAR BESSIE,—Bless you for sending the socks. To think of you knitting all those thousands and thousands of stitches. I am wearing a pair now, and it is cold on deck and melting snow, but my feet feel as if your warm hands were holding them. I had a real hard day of it all day. The last of the cargo came alongside with a rush, and in the middle of it I had to go up to the office and settle the ship's business and also sign on the crew. The H.L. people seem worried about the ship now. They must have known all along she is not too suitable for this trade, but they chartered her because Jenkins guaranteed her to steam 12 knots, and they must have that speed for this ship to keep step with their regular vessels. I think they have now been hearing things from somewhere. The Manager had me into his room. A fierce sort of man. He said the H.L. proposed to hold Jenkin & Co. strictly to Charter Party conditions, especially if the ship did not keep to time as guaranteed. This means they will deduct £50 a day from the charter hire for each day we are behind schedule. We shall have to drive the ship. I shall have to drive the men, too, by the look of them. Antwerp is a bad port to pick up a crew. When I got back to the ship at last there was a fine mess. The ship had still some vacant space in the holds, but I could see from the dock that she was already loaded down to her marks. The H.L. people must have made a mistake with their cargo bookings and engaged too big a proportion of heavy cargo as against bulky stuff. Of course, I knocked off the stevedores at once. You will understand I could not let them put any more cargo into the ship when her Plimsoll marks were already in the water. If I took the ship to sea with her marks

submerged and the Board of Trade found it out, I should lose my Certificate. And if you take an over-loaded ship across the Bay in winter you may lose her. There is a terrible row going on about it. The H.L. people are angry about me stopping the loading, and I have had the whole Office down on me. They say all the cargo they have engaged has got to go in the ship, and if they shut it out the Shippers will claim damages. They say they have made no mistake with their bookings, and that it must be the ship's capacity plan and her displacement tables which are wrong. They also say I am making trouble over nothing, as this will not be the first ship by a long way to go to sea loaded over her marks. They are right there, of course. It never happens with ships out of British ports, but it does sometimes when loading abroad, with a Skipper who has been got at. And also, maybe, when a man finds himself in the fix I am in now. For the H.L. people have told me straight that if I do not shut my eyes to the overloading and keep my mouth shut, too, then they will wire to the Owners to replace me with another man. They will not wire the true facts, of course. They dare not. But I suppose they will say they are dissatisfied with me on other grounds. There is one thing I know. If I stick to my guns I will get fired, and if that happens I will not get another job, because these things against a man get round fast. I came into my cabin an hour ago to write all this to you, because writing to you clears things up in my head. An hour ago I got what you might call the H.L.'s ultimatum. And now I hear the stevedores coming back aboard and the shore cranes starting to work again. I ought to go out now and stop them. I do not know what to do, Bessie. The ship is to sail at daylight to-morrow. If I stop the loading I will be bringing you this letter home in my pocket, having lost my job for doing what is right.

Nov. 25. Sailed daylight and are dropping our Elbe pilot now. Snowing all down the river and thick out here, so got no time to write proper good-bye. Love to you, Little Bess and baby. Pilot just going and he takes this.

Your

MARK.

s.s. *Spartan*,
AT SEA, *Dec. 5th.*

MY DEAR WIFE,—We are all well and should be in P. Said on the 8th, D.V. A big P. & O. vessel has just come up from astern and passed us at the rate of knots. I wish we had her power aboard here. She will be in P. Said to-morrow night, and I expect she may leave a letter for me there from you. We are just about a day behind time, I am sorry to say, in spite of all we could do. It has not been easy to keep the ship steaming 12 knots; but the

old girl has done well considering everything. It is a good job she is not one of those square-ended steel boxes they build nowadays and call ships. She is an old-timer, one of the few Clyde-built iron vessels still afloat. She is shaped like a proper ship, narrow and sharp-ended, so we can get 2 to 3 knots more out of her than most modern tramp steamers of the same tonnage. Her weak spot is the boilers, which did not get the new tubes the Chief asked for in Antwerp, and so he is having his troubles with them. But Mac is not to blame for us being a day astern of where we ought to be now. It is the weather that has been against us. It was thick all the way from the Elbe till we got round Ushant, 3½ days of it. Fog is bad anywhere, but the North Sea and the Channel are the worst places you could get it. I had to be on the bridge all the time, a spell of 80 hours. This is too long, I think, as a man is not so spry as he ought to be towards the end of it, which is bad, because in times like that you must have all your wits ready. The fog did clear a bit the first night and we got thick snow instead. We had one great bit of luck, though, sighting the Nord Hinder light between snow squalls. I was thankful for that, after steaming blind all that way and not being certain of the ship's position. After that bit of luck the fog shut down again solid and did not clear until we got into the Bay. We sighted nothing the whole way, but we did hear the fog signal on the Varne, which was another life-saver for me. We did not lose time over the fog, because I kept the ship going full speed through all of it. You see, if we slowed down and lost time we could never make it up again. So I had to take the risk. It is not a good risk to take. There is the ship and cargo, worth about £200,000, and 30 lives, all under my charge and, maybe, all lost if we hit the beach, not to think of the extra loss if we ran down another vessel. But we had to keep time, so I kept her going. It was blind work all the way. To cover myself and my Certificate in case of accidents I rang "Slow Ahead" on the engine-room telegraph and entered that in the Log, but I gave the Chief the tip on the quiet to keep his engines running full speed. It makes a man feel he has dirtied himself, having to play such tricks. But there is one thing that happened which makes me feel better about it. Somewhere down Channel a steamer came out of the fog right on top of us. She must have been a cross-Channel boat. We were square across her bows, and she must have run us down right amidships if we had been steaming slow. But as it was we got clear, although I thought she was going to cut the stern off us, she passed so close. Going down Channel we seemed to be in the middle of all the shipping in the

world. We could hear them all round, but we did not see anything, though we passed one chap so close we could hear his bow wave and someone shouting.

Turning the corner at Ushant was the sort of thing that takes 10 years off a man. We had nothing to go on but our dead reckoning since passing the Varne, and dead reckoning is no more than guess work after steaming for 2 days through all the Channel tides. Well, I reckoned we had reached the longitude of Ushant at last. I judged we ought to have made about enough Westing and it was time to turn south for Finisterre. But this was only a guess. If we turned South too soon we should pile up on Ushant, and if we kept on too far to the West we were all the time losing time and distance. I had the choice of losing time or risking losing the ship, with the certainty of losing my job in either case. So I steered South for Finisterre, and we did not hit Ushant, thank God. When I was sure we were clear and well down into the Bay, I turned in and slept like a dead man for 5 hours, when the 2nd Mate called me. He wanted to slow the ship down to ease her. I got on to the bridge and found we had walked into a hard Sou'-Westerly gale. That shows you I must have been hard and fast asleep, for I always wake up of my own accord at any change in the weather. But there it was, blowing very hard, with a high, steep head sea, with the ship butting into everything and not lifting to it like she ought to. It was the overloading made her do that. I have never seen her behave like it before. She just pushed her bow into the face of every sea and let them fall smack on top of her. The old girl looked as though she was tired and could not make a job of it. The fore deck was awash all the time, and all you could see of her from the bridge was the foremast sticking up out of the water and the fo'cas'le head now and then between seas. Fisher wanted to slow her down and take the sea on the bow to ease her. That was the thing to do, but it meant stopping just about where we were until the gale blew itself out. But that might be 2 days or longer, and we could not afford to wait for that. So I kept her going, watching the weak spot, which was the fore-hatch covers. Fisher kept his hand on the engine-room telegraph and watched me. The wind and sea increased, and then it got dark and I could not see anything, but by-and-by I heard someone shouting. It was the 2nd Mate. He said she would wash the hatches off No. 1, and then we would be done for. "Slow her down, man," he shouted, "before you lose her." Now, I had to keep the ship going, and I had to keep discipline aboard her too. So I said, or rather I shouted, because you had to shout in that wind, "This isn't the

Memnon, Mr Fisher. I am the only man who gives orders on this bridge." I remember what I said, because I was sorry about it afterwards. There was no need for me to bring in the name of the ship that man has lost. It just shows the state of mind you can get into if you do not get enough sleep.

The blow lasted 3 days, and we steamed full speed into it all the time, and the fore hatch held. But all that wind ahead slowed us down, of course, and that was where we lost one day. We have managed to make up a little coming down the Mediterranean, but not much, for fear of running out of bunkers before we can get to P. Said. We bunkered at Hamburg with enough coal to get us to P. Said and a safety margin besides, of course. But we had to cut our margin down because of the cargo-overloading I told you about. After we passed Gib. the Chief came along and told me he was worried about the consumption. We burnt a lot of extra coal driving the ship through that blow in the Bay, but according to Mackenzie, the real trouble is it takes more coal to press the ship up to 12 knots than he estimated. After passing Gib. the Chief measured the coal remaining in the bunkers, and he said we then had just enough, but no more, to get us to P. Said, but if we got head winds we would run out of coal before we got there. He suggested slowing the ship down and reducing the consumption that way, or else calling in for bunkers at Malta. Now we can not slow down because we are late already, and calling at Malta meant deviation, expense and 2 days delay for sure. So I have taken the risk and kept the ship going along at 12. We shall be unlucky to get strong head winds now, and I have a hope that old Mac, who is a good man and a canny one, may have a little more coal up his sleeve than he admits. Malta is out of the question now, at any rate, so if we do get a head wind and I am wrong about the Chief's nest-egg, then we shall arrive at P. Said burning the ship's woodwork and some of our wood-pulp cargo under the boilers. If that happens your old man will have to try and find a shore job. No one would employ him again at sea. And sometimes I think that might be the best thing that could happen. It would be fine to get a shore job and be Home every night, Maggie. If only I had the capital I would start a little chicken farm. I always had a fancy for that, and think I might make enough at it to keep us. If I could only manage to get a turn of luck.

PORT SAID, *Dec. 8th.* That is over. I have been worried all the way since Gib. It was a close shave. We got here on the bunker sweepings. But we got here, all well. There is only one drawback to our good passage. We seem to have arrived here before your letter. The mail should catch us up

before we get to Colombo, though, so I am looking forward to getting there. We are bunkering now and go through the Canal to-night, so I will close this with my love to you and the children.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

s.s. *Spartan*,
AT SEA, *Dec.* 18*th*.

MY DEAR BESSIE,—Here we are, all well, and getting along towards Colombo. Nothing much to write about this passage, but we have not managed to make up that lost day yet, try how we will. I hoped to make up time coming down the Red Sea, but did not. The Chief had trouble with his men over keeping steam. It was hot below, of course, but the firemen we shipped in Hamburg are a poor crowd. They ran foul of the 2nd Engineer in the end, and were just about shoving him down the crank-pit when the Chief turned up and showed them who was Boss with a Stetson wrench. All this made for bad blood, of course, and off Perim I had my turn of it. The whole stoke-hold gang off watch came up on my bridge. It was about the food, of course; the usual excuse for making trouble. You know. Not fit for pigs, let alone men working in that heat. The usual thing. I ordered them off the bridge, but they stood there and jeered at me, and one big trimmer, Nordstrom, shoved a pan of stew under my nose and said if I thought it was fit for a man I had better try and eat some. All that sort of talk. It was silly and all nonsense. The men are worse than children. The food was the same as they have been getting all the voyage without a grumble. I told them so, and this Nordstrom made as if to throw the pan of stew over me. I did not know what to do. The whole thing was so silly. What can a man do in such a case? And there they stood, abusing me. I said, Well, men, if you will not be reasonable I will tell you what I will do. I walked up and down in front of them thinking what I could do. There is a rack of wooden fire-buckets on the bridge, and as I passed I reached for one and swung it into Nordstrom's face. He dropped and the rest did not wait. They fought to get first down the bridge ladder and there was a regular panic when I kicked the stew pan after them. The men are just like children and no real *bad* man amongst the lot, thank goodness. That would have made things different, of course. But even this Nordstrom is just a kid. I stuck some plaster on his head and when I gave him a tot of rum he grinned and said it was worth the trouble.

I have just been taking some star sights and got a good fix, I hope, as we are now working down for the Eight Degree Channel, which is the sort of place I do not like taking a ship into, somehow. It has a lot of low islands and reefs on each side which you can easily

hit at night before you see them, and here we are, somewhere, running full speed towards the things, after days at sea seeing nothing at all, just water. Of course it is an easy enough piece of navigation and most ship-masters would laugh if they read this. But between you and me, Maggie, I have never been able to bring myself to believe, *really*, that a man can find his position on the waters by taking a sight of the sun or a star and just figuring it all out from a book of rules. It does not seem natural, even after I have done it myself hundreds of times. If you asked a B. of T. Examiner or an Extra Master about this he would prove it was all as natural as life. But I cannot help wondering. I have just been out on deck and taken a look round. The sea is just a big, empty circle and the stars look right through you and do not know you are there. I see I can not explain, but I am *sure* the sea and those stars have got nothing to do with a dirty old steamer and Mark Edwards or any book of rules. I would lose my Certificate if the B. of T. or the Owners knew I felt like this. But don't you go thinking I am off my head, Maggie. We will sight Minicoy Light tomorrow, just where it ought to be, and when I do I will think, no doubt, what a clever chap I am. But out here at night it seems just silly to shape a course East by South across all this water and expect to find a lighthouse on the slope down the other side of the horizon. And I have noticed I am not the only Master who loses his sleep when he is due to make a landfall. But I had better stop and turn in and just *go* to sleep. It would feel better if I had you here, with your head in the crook of my arm, my dear.

COLOMBO, *Dec. 23rd.* Arrived here yesterday and found no letters for the ship, except one from the Owners asking me to account for a shortage in our last grain cargo, which beats me. We turned out 10 tons short last voyage, it seems. I should like to ask them do they think I eat it. I can not understand about the ship's mail, and think some lazy beggar in the P. Said office must have forgotten to post it on. I should like to have 5 minutes with that chap. I hope you are all well. We are all well here, except we arrived a day behind and will now lose another day. You discharge into lighters here, with the ship's gear, and we have 300 tons to put out, mostly box-shooks. Both the after winches broke down soon after we made a start and it is a shore job to repair them. We have now got some extra gangs of coolies, passing the shooks out by hand, but it is slow work and expensive, and the H.L. Agents are raising Cain with me about it and other things. The winches are young Mr Jenkin's fault, but I have to stand the racket. I am to blame, though, for putting my foot in it with the Agents'

Shipping Clerk here as soon as we arrived. I had been up all night, making the land, and have had the prickly heat or some such itch bad since the Red Sea, so know I have to keep a sharp watch-out on my temper. But this chap came alongside in his launch before we had finished mooring the ship and he began shouting for a ladder. The rope ladder was over the side and I pointed to it, but he was too big a bug it seems for that, and he wanted the accommodation ladder lowered. We had to finish mooring before the Mate could spare the hands to get the big ladder over, so His Nibs was kept waiting for half an hour. He thought I kept him on purpose. I tried to smooth him down with a cup of coffee and one of my cigars I have to keep for Customs Officers and such. Now I know the ship's coffee is nothing extra, but I bought those cigars myself in Manilla. But that chap spat out his first mouthful of coffee and threw the cigar overboard after his first whiff at it. I like Germans all right as a rule, but this one was a pig, and I told him so, like a fool. And I am suffering for it, as he is making things nasty for me in the office now. I can stand that, though, because we had a cable from the Owners to bunker here with enough Best Welsh to last us to Moji. This will help our steaming fine, and I think the H.L. must have been raising a row with the Owners about our not keeping to time. We should be all right now, as far as our speed goes, and if we can only manage to get quick despatch at the discharging ports, I hope we may finish the outward run on time yet. We were scheduled to sail from here yesterday, but it will be late to-morrow before we get away. I shall be glad to get to sea. Colombo is an expensive port, and the price of fresh provisions here is terrible. It takes some doing to keep the ship's victualling down to 1s. 2d. per head per day. You know if we exceed that I have to pay the difference, so I have had to cut down the Steward's Requisition here. This will mean a fuss, I am afraid, as the Engineers have been growling about their Mess already. Well, they will have to growl, but it is bad when the Officers begin this sort of thing as well as the men. You will think to hear me that my life is all trouble, but do not worry, as I am used to it. I tell you it all because it is a big comfort to me to have someone I can tell it to without having to keep anything back, or thinking of the consequences. So, Bessie my dear, you must put up with my growling if you will. It is after midnight and cooling off a bit now, so I think I might get some sleep. Good night, my dear. I wish you were here with me.

Dec. 25th. Christmas Day! It does not feel much like it. We are just sailing.

Best love to you all at Home, from

MARK.

PENANG ROADS,
Jan. 4th, 1904.

MY DEAR WIFE,—We arrived last night, and it is now well past midnight again, but we have not yet had any communication with the shore, which worries me. It is blowing hard and there is too much sea running for any shore boats to come off to us. This is a queer place. There is no harbour here at all, just an open roadstead with no shelter, and it is so shallow that we have had to anchor 3 miles off-shore. We have our gear all ready to discharge overside to lighters, but there has been no sign of a lighter or anything else all day. It is a shame to be losing time here like this after all the trouble we had to make a quick passage from Colombo, in spite of the continuous heavy weather. It was a case of drive, drive, drive all the way, but we got here on time. And now here we lay. Well, it is no use worrying, but I wish I knew what to do and could get in touch with the Agents ashore. There is one comfort. There are 3 other ships here in the same box, waiting to load or discharge, and none of them have worked to-day either. One of them, a big Shire Line boat, got tired of waiting or something this evening and hove up and proceeded South. I do not much like the look of the weather myself, and if we cannot discharge again to-morrow and the Agents do not come off, I am wondering if I ought not to go on to our next port, Singapore, and trans-ship the Penang cargo back from there. We have less than 200 tons for here, and it should save time and money if we trans-ship it from Singapore instead of laying here idle for goodness knows how long. So you see it would relieve my mind a lot if the weather would only fine down. We had some trouble with the hands after Colombo. They got at a consignment of whiskey stowed down No. 1 'tween deck. They must have lifted the tarpaulin and a hatch cover on the quiet at night. If they had kept quiet about it we might not have found out, but what opened my eyes to their game was a row in the fo'cas'le. I went forward to see what was up and found all hands drunk and the fo'cas'le full of bottles. I ordered the men out on deck and they hove bottles at me. It would have been foolish to try and tackle that crowd of fighting drunks, so I went aft and got the Chief and young Harrison and the 2nd Engineer, and we coupled up a wash-deck hose and put the fire-nozzle on it. The Chief got a good pressure on the pump, and I then called the men to come out, and they just swore at me, so we let them have it. We fairly flooded them out. They came up from there like a lot of drowned puppies, except for that squarehead trimmer, Nordstrom, who I told you had given me trouble before. He was mad drunk and had a knife and meant business, sure enough, but that high pressure

jet of water in the face knocked him down as if he had been hit a full-arm swing with a crowbar. He is still not fit for much, and for 2 days after I was scared we had killed him. The very next night they got at the whiskey again. You see it is not easy to stop that sort of thing, short of keeping an officer down the hold every night. And with only 2 mates aboard here we can not manage that. I had a lamp hung up over No. 1 Hatch the next night, so that the officer on watch on the bridge could see anyone trying to open the hatch cover, but they kept putting the light out. I had it lit a dozen times, but someone always sneaked up and knocked it out. Then they would laugh and shout out things at us on the bridge. It was very aggravating. Then they smashed the lamp and after I had another one hung up they threw it overboard. I was wild, but I fired my revolver to frighten them, not to hit anybody. That stopped their game and next day I did what I ought to have thought of before. I had planks spiked across the hatch covers so that they could not lift them without making a noise and warning us. It all sounds silly, and it is silly, too, but you cannot understand, my dear, how this sort of thing worries a man at the time. It is not like on shore, where you can call in a policeman. At sea you have to do the best you can by yourself.

It is just getting light now. A dirty-looking dawn, and the weather looks worse than ever. It is getting serious, and this will be another day lost if I do not watch out. If there are no signs of any lighters coming off to us by breakfast time, I have made up my mind to take the ship on to Singapore. In my judgment, that will be acting in the best interests of my Owners, the Charterers and all concerned. I hope I am right in this. If not it will be serious, but I feel I should be wrong to keep the ship lying here idle for an unknown time.

SINGAPORE, *Jan. 7th.* We arrived last night and I am in a good bit of trouble with the Agents here. They say I did wrong to bring the Penang cargo on. The devil of it is, the Penang Agents have wired to say it was fine weather there after we left. Well, there is one thing. There was more than trouble waiting for me at the office here. There were your letters, sent on from P. Said and Colombo. To find you are all well at Home, that is what counts, and now it will take more than trouble with the Agents to worry me. This outward voyage is 3 parts done now, and in 3 months we should be back in Hamburg. And you are going to join me there this time, Bessie, even if I have to sell my sextant to get the money. So look out! The hands have been to the Harbour Office, complaining about the food aboard here and other things. They have also told some worked-up yarn about me shooting at them,

which I told you about. There is an Inquiry to-day about it, which I have to attend. So I will close this as the Mail goes to-day, too. We have 2000 tons to discharge here, and shall not sail before the 12th. I will write again before we sail and now close with love to you and my Little Bess and the Son.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

OFFICERS' HOME,
SINGAPORE, *Jan.* 14*th.*

MY DEAR WIFE,—You will be seeing me now sooner than you thought. I will be Home in a month. But not in my own ship, my dear Bessie. I am being sent Home a passenger. I have been sacked. Damn them. I hardly know how to explain how this has happened. It is all a damned, underhand mixed up business. The main thing is, I see that the H.L. people must have had their knife into me. It seems they have had it in me from the first. The Head Office in Hamburg wrote a bad report about me to Jenkin. I do not know what they said, but I feel pretty sure that that trouble there over the damaged wood-pulp and then the trouble about overloading the ship is at the bottom of it. At any rate, I had a letter here from the Owners giving me a first-rate telling off. One thing they wrote is, "It is of first importance to keep on the best of terms with the Charterers, but instead you appear to have raised unnecessary difficulties on trivial points and thoroughly antagonised our Hamburg friends. They advise us they found you most unsatisfactory and difficult to work with, and moreover, their Colombo Branch has since complained to the same effect." Now, that must be that pig of a Colombo Shipping Clerk I told you about. The swine has been busy, and I could bet he has written more dirt about me to the Agents here and at Penang too. At any rate, they began jumping on me as soon as we arrived. First it was the ship being astern of schedule. There was the devil to pay about that. And then there was the business of the over-carried Penang cargo. The Penang Agents wanted my blood over that. The ship was charged with the cost of transshipping the cargo back to Penang, and Jenkin's, of course, are vexed with me for letting them in for this expense. Then there was a riot about the broached whiskey. The Consignees here have put in a heavy claim for the loss and damage, which the H.L. passed on to Jenkin too. Jenkin's got red hot about it, and they must have made the cables red hot too, I should think, the amount of telegrams they have been sending over this and everything. All this was enough to worry a man, but I hoped things were not serious for me until the Manager here came down aboard and kicked up a row over the ship being dirty and unpainted, as he said. Then I knew they were

looking for trouble. The ship was not in great shape to look at, and that is a fact. Her funnel and topsides were supposed to be painted the H.L. colours for this charter, but the job was not quite finished. I know the H.L. like to keep their vessels looking smart. It helps business. But their own boats carry enough men to do it, while we carried only 8 hands on deck all told. I explained this to the Agent, but he would not listen to reason. It looked to me he was glad of an excuse to make trouble for me, and he sent off another telegram to Jenkin about the state of the ship. On top of all this the crew hatched up a complaint against me at the Harbour Office and I had to appear there before the King's Harbour Master. The men swore to being starved and ill-treated the whole voyage and that I had tried to shoot some of them. The H. Master has commanded ships himself, so he knew that the men will swear to anything against a shipmaster. But I had to admit to knocking out that Nordstrom twice, and it came out how he took 2 days to come round the second time. I had to admit how I shot off my revolver, too, and all this turned the case against me. But the finisher was when the Steward let on I had refused to get in a supply of fresh provisions at Colombo. It turns out it is against the Board of Trade Regulations to feed the crew on only salt meat in the tropics. I thought I was going to get my Certificate endorsed, which would have been the end of me, but I was lucky and only got slated for breaking the Victualling rules and 'brutality' to the hands. So that was all right. But on sailing day the hands, out of devilment, refused to go on in the ship, and the Harbour Office had to back them up, of course, considering the silly judgment they had given before against me. This meant hanging the ship up another day to get a new crew. This was the last straw with the H.L. people, although I think they must have had their scheme all laid ready for me in any case, because the first thing I knew they showed me a cable from Jenkin's ordering me to hand over command of the ship to a man the Agents had down there alongside the ship, all ready and waiting to step into my job. So now I am out of a job. And for good, I should think, because I do not see Jenkin & Co. giving me a good reference after what has happened. I have found out they have to give me a free passage Home and continue me on pay until I arrive in the U.K., and then I am done. You must try and save every penny you can, Bessie, for if I have £15 when I get Home I shall be lucky. That £15 will have to last us until I can earn some more, and I tell you I shall have a hard job to get another berth after this. I do not like thinking of it, but do not be afraid, Bessie. If it comes to the worst, surely I can get a

job as A.B. somewhere, you would think, which would be a come down, but it would keep us from starving, anyway. It is no use writing any more about it. You know the worst now. I am sorry, Bessie, for what I have let you in for. The more I look at it the more it looks to me that I lost my job from doing it too well and doing what was right. That makes a man think. I think it would be better not to tell the children. I send them my love and you too, my dear Wife. I shall be seeing you all soon, which is one comfort to look forward to.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

s.s. *Keelung*,
SINGAPORE, *Feb. 5th.*

DEAR BESSIE,—*Do not open the enclosed packet in front of anyone.* Do not be scared. It is £250 in Bank of England notes. It is half of a payment due me for a job I have to do. *But you must keep quiet about it.* It would not do at all if anyone knew I had been paid this money. That is why I am sending it like this and not through a Bank. And it is better for you to have it than for me to keep it, the way things are. It is in £5 notes, so that you can change them one at a time when you want money. Now do not change them at a Bank, but at shops in Liverpool. Be careful. Now do not be afraid. I have not stolen them or done anything like that. The money is for some work I have agreed to do, and I am to get the other half when the job is done. The pay is a lot, because I shall have to work hard for it and maybe take a bit of risk. But nothing for you to get scared about, and I shall surely be all right. I have got command of this ship, which is owned by a firm of Chinese here. They have treated me very square. So I am not coming Home just yet, but this job will not last more than 2 months, when I will come Home as soon as I can.

This is a great bit of luck, coming when things were so bad. This is a good ship. She is old, but a good ship yet. The accommodation is aft under the poop, in the old-fashioned way, and my cabin and the saloon are panelled in bird's-eye maple, and very big and comfortable. I wish you could see them. All hands are Chinamen and those Malay chaps, except for me, the Chief Engineer and the Mate. The Chief is a hard case and well in with the Owners, and he owns shares in the ship. The Mate is not much. Whiskey is his trouble. We sail some time this week for Macassar and a lot of small ports round Celebes and the Dutch islands. There is no rush aboard here. Everything easy and comfortable, and I do not have to worry my head over the cargo, which is all done by the Owners' Chinaman, a sort of Purser, who they call the Compradore. About all I have to do is to navigate the ship, so you see, Bessie, I am in for a good easy

time and there is nothing to worry about. So you be a good girl now, and do not worry yourself. I shall be coming Home all right in about 2 months and with another £250 in my pocket. We will have that chicken farm yet, Bessie. Just think of it. Me working round the place all day and Home every night and all night. I see a kind of picture of it all, and I tell you, Bessie, I think it is well worth while taking a bit of a chance for. Be sure to do just what I told you about the money. I will write again when I get a chance, but do not know what the mails are like round those islands.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

P.S.—Now the main thing is for you not to feel scared about this. I shall surely be all right and Home in 3 months with all that money. You must be careful only because this job is as you might say a bit outside the law. You know I always was an honest man, but I got nothing but trouble out of it, Bessie, and then the sack in the end. Please try and understand. Better burn this. MARK.

OFFICERS' HOME,
SINGAPORE, *April* 3rd.

MY DEAR BESSIE,—I am back here again and have had no chance to post a letter anywhere since we left. We have been unlucky and lost the poor old *Keelung* two weeks ago. We were coming out of Samarinda when the steering gear broke down. We were going full speed at the time, and the ship piled right up on the reef at the entrance before I had a chance to stop her. She took the ground hard and scraped all the bottom off the fore end of her. At low tide she slipped off and sank in deep water. A total loss and no chance of salving anything. It was fine weather and all hands got away in the boats, and we just had a row of 5 miles back to Samarinda again. Two days after we got a lift in a coaster to Banjer, and came on from there in the Dutch Mail. There is to be a Court of Inquiry here on the loss of the ship, and when that is over I shall come straight Home. I shall come out of the Inquiry all right, and they can do nothing to my Certificate as it was a pure accident and no fault of mine that the steering engine jammed. Lloyds have been sniffing about amongst the hands to try and hear something, so maybe they suspect the thing was a put-up Insurance job. But I did all I could to save the ship, Bessie, so no need to worry. You know you can believe me, and I swear to you I was not to blame. She was a good ship. I got properly fond of her. I came to think more of her than any ship I have ever been in. You could handle her like a little boat. She was a good ship and comfortable, and it would have been fine if I could have gone on in command of her. I felt like you would if you saw a good friend killed

in an accident, when I felt her strike that reef.

Bessie, it is no good. I find I must tell you the truth. It is not right to have secrets from you, and I must ease my mind and tell you what I have done. And this will ease yours too, I think. I was paid to lose the *Keelung*. It was her Chief Engineer, Tier, who got me into the thing. He was staying in this Officers' Home, where I was stopping too, after I got kicked out of the *Spartan*. Tier and I got friendly, and I told him how I was sacked out of my ship and the way I had been treated. Tier is a queer chap and a hard case, but a good man at heart, and I was mighty glad to talk to anyone just then and feel I had a friend. Tier stuck by me and we talked a good bit. I was feeling pretty down in my luck and scared about the future, and one night I said some hard things about Jenkin & Co. and all Owners generally. And it was then Tier surprised me. He said all Owners were not so bad, because he was an Owner himself in a sort of way. He told me how he was part Owner of the *Keelung*, or had a good few shares in her anyway, and said he thought he could get me the command of her. At first I did not believe this. I thought it was just talk. But when I found he meant it, I could have gone down on my knees to him, Bessie, for that job. And Tier was artful, as I know now, but did not then. He let the thought of my God-sent stroke of luck sink into me for 2 days. He left me to hug the thought of my new berth to myself till I was pretty well ripe to commit murder rather than part with it, and it was then he let out what it was I would have to do to get the job. He put it to me straight. I was to pile the ship up and make a total loss of her, so that the Owners could get her Insurance money. He offered me £500 for the job. And at last I agreed to do it. I did not agree at first, Bessie. But I did in the end. You see, I was just about desperate then, and it was for you and the kids I did it, too, so you must not think too hard of me.

Tier took me to see his Partners, the Chinamen, and the job was fixed up that day without any trouble, except I stuck out for getting half my pay then. You see, there could be nothing written down and they were Chinamen, so I was afraid they might not pay up after I had done the job. Only I see now I need not have worried, as they have been fair and square with me all through. I got my bag and went aboard my ship that same day. It did feel grand, having a ship again. She had been laid up for a month, and needed some work on her and some paint, but I saw at once she was all right and would suit me. She was old and maybe out of date as a dividend earner, with a high coal consumption for her cargo capacity and her small hatches and all that, but she was a pretty ship, with her

clipper bow and a fine rake to her masts and funnel. She had teak decks and her accommodation was grand. She was an old-timer, but compared to the other vessels I have been in she was a yacht, and I fairly fell in love with her from the start. She was no bother to run. Tier had the engine department well in hand and the cargo and victualling were all looked after by the Compradore, and though the Mate was no good, the deck was run, and well run, by the Bo'sun, a Malay they called the Serang. Within a day or two I knew I was in the best job I had ever struck. We had Chinese in the galley and the food aft was good. I used to look forward to sitting down to my meals, which is something I do not remember doing since I started going to sea, except for your cooking at Home. We sailed with all sorts of cargo and a deck load of Chinese under the awnings as well. We were a full ship leaving Singapore, and we had a fine passage to Macassar. We had fine weather all the voyage if it comes to that. You never do get anything but fine weather in those seas round the Islands. No fog or gales, and fine weather all the time, with never any cold, of course. It was the kind of going to sea I sometimes used to dream about, but never thought I could get. It agreed with me fine. We put out some cargo at Macassar and took some more in, and then went on to do the same at all the little ports round Celebes. I did not have to worry what went into the ship or what went out of her. The Compradore did all that part. He was a good man, and I found he had shares in the ship, like Tier had. So I had two Owners aboard my ship, which is bad as a rule and leads to trouble for the Master, but those two never troubled me. Tier ran his engines and the Compradore ran the cargo, and they left me alone to run the ship. The navigation kept me busy. It was pretty tricky work, because the whole place is thick with little islands and unmarked reefs, and a lighthouse or a buoy anywhere is mighty rare. I had to keep lively and on the jump to see we hit nothing, but I liked it. It is good somehow to feel you have made a difficult passage safely, and I used to feel fine after bringing the ship up to a good berth, without any pilot, in some of those rum harbours and up rivers I had never even heard of before. I did all right and I was having a good time, Bessie, sailing the ship all around Celebes, which is a pretty place to see, and taking her in and out of those little harbours every day. I got fat on it. And then one day, coming down the East coast of Borneo and on the Homeward run, Tier comes along and asks when am I going to put a finish on it and earn my money. He said he had been watching the care I took

of the ship and the navigation, but that what he was paying me for was to pile the ship up on the beach and not to keep her off it. He laughed at me and told me I would get the ship safe back to Singapore if I did not look out. But I did not do any laughing. He brought home to me what I had been trying to fool myself to forget ever since the voyage started. The last thing I wanted, Bessie, was to lose that ship. I wanted to keep her for good. I wanted, more than I had ever wanted anything, to keep on in command of her as long as I could, making voyages in those waters. I was happy there, Bessie. And I used to fool myself, thinking of it going on and on, with you and the children coming out from Home and living aboard with me, perhaps, or anyway at Singapore, where I'd see you every 2 months. It was good to think of and I hated the thought of losing it for good and all by putting the ship ashore. I had a feeling for the ship, too, and the thought of wrecking her was as bad as having to murder someone I was fond of. So I put Tier off that time. I told him to leave me to do my job in my own time and my own way. So I carried on, but it got harder all the time for me to do what I had to do. Then Tier came to me again. We were getting on towards the end of the run by then, and he was getting anxious, I think. He pressed me to tell him where I meant to pile the ship up, and it was then I told him how I felt. And I said I did not see why he wanted the ship lost, because I could see trade was good and the ship was picking up plenty of cargo at every port and must be earning a lot of freight. I said to lose the ship seemed like throwing away good business. Tier agreed how she was making money, but he explained she was old and very expensive to run, and how she would have to have new boilers and a lot of repairs done before she could pass her next Survey, which was due soon. He said the new boilers and other work would cost more than the ship was worth, which was the reason they had decided to lose her and get the Insurance on her and buy another modern steamer which would be more economical to run. He said there was a fortune in running the trade with a new ship like that. So I asked him if he thought it was worth while dirtying himself by playing such a low game on the Insurance people, but he said the Underwriters must have raked in three times the ship's value in premiums during her 30 years' life, and he said he thought it about time they were made to fork out some of it, which would only be a third of what they had made out of her anyway. So you can see Tier is a real hard case, but in spite of all he is good-hearted and I could not but feel friendly to him. He liked me too, I knew, so I put it to him about the risk he was running of

losing everything and, maybe, doing a long spell in prison as well. I asked him to let me take the ship back safe to Singapore, and I said I would pay back the £250 if only he would continue me in command of the ship. I told him straight I could hardly bring myself to lose her. But it was no good. He said, even if he agreed to what I asked, his Partners would not. So that was where I had to leave it.

I do not know if I could ever have brought myself to pile the ship up, Bessie. I hope not, but I do not know now, because Tier did the job for me. He did it coming out of Samarinda, two days after our talk. The entrance channel there is narrow, with reefs awash at each side, and the tide runs athwart them. An awkward place, so I gave the ship full speed to get good steering and was conning her careful down the middle of the channel when she took a little sheer. I sang out to the hand at the wheel to starboard his helm and I watched the ship's head, expecting her to come out of her sheer and swing back to her course again. But she went on, swinging in towards the reef, and I turned and saw the hand at the wheel fighting to turn it. I jumped to help him, and found the wheel stuck. It would not move, so I knew the steering engine must be jammed. I rang full speed astern on the telegraph and shouted to the Mate, who was stowing the gear on the fo'cas'le head, to let go both anchors. Our steering engine was housed under the bridge, and I was half-way down the bridge ladder when I saw Tier come out of the wheel-house. Then I understood why the steering engine had jammed. And that man actually winked at me then, Bessie, when the ship ran up on the reef. She sounded like a great tin tray falling down stairs, Bessie, and she shuddered. I watched the mainmast whipping about and I thought it would fall on me. The ship heaved up her bow as if she were trying to keep above water. Then she lay quite still and quiet, and I knew she was done. Well, that is how it happened, Bessie, and after that we left her like I told you. It grieved me to leave her. I wished to try and save her, but there was no hope of that.

Now I have to stay here till the Inquiry, which will be over next week, I hope. After that I shall come Home and should be with you soon after you get this. We will go into things then and see about getting hold of that farm or something. That will be fine, although it is queer that now I can leave the sea I feel sorry to do it. It must be the last voyage in the old *Keelung* which makes me feel like this, I think. I wish that could have gone on, with you and the children living out here and coming a voyage with me now and then. But that is all done and gone, worse luck. I am wondering what sort of a hand I will make with chickens,

old girl. It will be all new work to me and I cannot help feeling a bit anxious. But I will put my back into it and it is sure to come out all right. This is a long letter. I never wrote a longer one. I must coil up, which I do with my love to you. Tell Little Bess and the Boy I will be coming Home soon and say I am bringing them a whole lot of nice presents, so they will be looking forward to seeing me.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

OFFICERS' HOME,
SINGAPORE, *April 11th.*

BESSIE, MY LASS,—Well, I have some proper news for us this time! Let me get it down straight, or you will not understand how it happened, and I am still a bit worked up about it all, so I hardly believe it myself yet. First, there was the Inquiry. It was a stiff business while it lasted, but it went off all right. The Judge had 2 Assessors to help him, the Harbour Master here and a Navy Captain. The Harbour Master had his doubts, I could see, but that Navy Captain stood up for me all through. The Insurance people's lawyer smelt a rat and he was after it like a little dog, but he could not manage to dig anything up as Tier and me were the only ones who knew anything. So I kept my Certificate, and the Owners get the full Insurance on the *Keelung*.

Well, Bessie, when it was all over and all safe, I began to feel mighty mean about it all. It is funny, but instead of feeling pleased at being well out of it, I just felt mean. I felt dirty. I felt miserable, because, you see, I *was* dirty. I had done a dirty thing. I was in my room here all night, thinking about it. I said, If I am to go on like this all the rest of my life feeling a dirty swindler, I would just as soon be dead and out of it. And there was the thought of you, Bessie, knowing what I had done and looking down on me for it, even if you tried hard not to. I could never bear that. I had taken money to cast a good ship away and rob the Underwriters. There was the dirt and it only made me feel worse to think I had not had the guts to do the dirty job I had taken dirty money for. Then the next day a queer thing happened. Tier came in and found me like that and I told him how I saw things. And that man laughed at me, Bessie. He is a funny chap and a hard case, as I have told you. But Tier is a clever man. He laughed at me, but then he said, "All right, Edwards. If you will not take the money you won't, and the Firm is in £250. But the Firm is buying a new ship and we do not want to lose *this* one." Then he said the Underwriters had put up the rate of premium on the Firm, owing to them having lost the *Keelung*, and so Tier and his Partners had made up their minds to run the new ship uninsured. So Tier said they wanted a Master who would

be sure to keep the ship off the ground and out of trouble. Then he laughed a lot and he said, "Edwards, if you take as much care of the new ship as you tried to of the old one, then we shan't have any need to worry." Then, Bessie, he laughed a lot and I thought he was joking. But, by God, he was *offering me command of the new ship!* He said, with the Firm running the ship uninsured, they needed an honest man and an extra careful Master for her, and how I had shown him I was both. It was a miracle, Bessie, and I jumped at it. It is all fixed. The Firm are buying the *Mercator*. She is a grand little ship, only 2 years old and just suited to our trade. I take her over in a few days from her present owners as soon as she is discharged. It all feels very wonderful to me, and I shall not really believe it all till I feel my new ship under my feet. I am not taking the second £250, but my pay is £25 a month. £25 every month, Bessie. Can you believe it? It is true. And £25 a month earned is better than any £250 of dirty money. And the best of it is the job should last me for the rest of my seagoing days if only I am careful. And you may be mighty sure I will do my best to be that. The Firm say they do not want that first £250 back, but I should never feel comfortable in my mind if I kept it, and I mean to pay it back, less £25 a month for the time I was in command of the *Keelung*. And I shall not be long before I can save up what is due out of my present pay. But in the meantime, Bessie, there is a fine use for some of that £250. That is, to pay your and the children's passages out to Singapore by the first steamer you can manage. Now you do your best to come along quick, old woman, and join me. You must sell up our bits of furniture and stuff and come out at once. My round voyage takes just 2 months, and I count on being back here again before the end of June. Now you can surely manage to get out here by then, Bessie. It will be the best hour of my life when your ship arrives here and I see you and Little Bess again, and my Son, too. My plan is to take you all for a round trip in the *Mercator* and after that you can settle down ashore and make our Home here.

I have had a good time writing this letter and I would give a good deal if I could watch your face when you read it. It all seems too good to be true and I expect you will feel like that, too. But it *is* true, Bessie, and our ship has come Home at last. Now I am going out to send you off a cable about you coming out here at once. And I can see you in a bit of a fluster when you get it! I wish I could be there to lend you a hand, but I can not, of course. Now I must close, with my love to you and the children.

Your loving husband,

MARK.

FUENTERRABIA.

BY DAVID HANNAY.

FUENTERRABIA, which we know as Fontarabia — and sometimes associate vaguely with the Arabs—must be familiar enough to all who go into Spain by the western end of the Pyrenees. The small town is within sight of the railway station at Irun, may be visited in the interval of changing trains at the frontier, and is, frequently, if only for the sake of its queer old 'Quality Street.' The 'Fontarabian echoes,' which still linger among its hills, have nothing to tell of the Arabs. Some of that race who led hosts of Africans into Aquitaine in the early times of the Moslem conquest of Spain may have passed the river there, going to conquer, and coming back in flight before the Franks. Yet it is not the Arabian but the 'Foaming stream,' and is so called from the shallows, the rapids, the swiftly rising and falling tides of the Bidassoa. Whether or no it has to thank the Basques for its name is a question which a prudent man will leave to the learned who see, or think they see, their way through the obscurities of that language. If we can believe the Spaniards who speak Castilian, the devil once applied himself to mastering the 'Euscaro,' but retired quite baffled after a ten years' struggle. To-day the Bidassoa is the name of the river, and Fuenterrabia of the town. For the very sufficient reason that it stands on a frontier, Fuenterrabia has been the centre of much fighting. An eye-witness looking on from a roof would have seen the last battle fought on the soil of Spain in the Peninsular War. Behind the repulse of Soult on that occasion, by the Spaniards —who won the battle 'on their own,' though also by a stroke of luck in the shape of a sudden rise of the river—there lies a long string of conflicts. One of them is well worth telling—to wit, the 'siege and relief' of 1638, which ended in a manner very painful to the French who were the besiegers, and surprisingly joyful to the Spaniards who were the besieged.

Comedies were put on the stage to celebrate the victory. The stage then did a good deal of the work which now falls to the newspapers. But the King went further. He caused a book to be written and published at the Royal expense, in the printing office of Catalina de Ibarra, in 1639. 'Sitio y Socorro de Fuenterrabia' is as much of a longer title as need be quoted. In point of quality of paper, legibility of print, blackness of ink and

artistic merits of the title-page, the volume does credit to the Madrid press of the seventeenth century. There is at the top a medallion portrait of the King, supported by stalwart female figures; at the foot his coat of arms held up by plump boy angels. In the centre is the title with one fine figure of a woman on the left, who stands above the words 'Religio Triumphavit,' while a corresponding Amazon propped on a pillar has 'Fortitudo Vicit' printed just below. When you turn to the text you find that it is concerned with 'matter of Blue Book,' summarised and presented 'dressed with care and cost' to the reader.

The King had ordered his Ministers to prepare, for the instruction of his faithful subjects, a comprehensive account of all that had happened in 1638, a wonderful year. We may think that the 'all' omitted a good deal, notably on the side of finance. In 1639 they thought that public affairs were diplomacy and war. The author or authors of this official summary neglect all else. But they had plenty to write of without going beyond their limits. Far out in Chili there was war with the Araucans, and the Dutch had invaded Bahia. Brazil was part of King Philip's dominions, for in 1639 he was still, and for a year or so was to be, King of Portugal. Going from the Indies farther west we meet Dutch enemies engaged in attacking the Philippines and Goa. This is the mere outer ring. When we get nearer home, Moorish 'tyrants' are found attacking Spanish stations on the coast of Africa. France is assailing Italy, or at least the Spanish possessions there, particularly Milan. As for the Spanish Netherlands, they are just one seething pot of campaigns, sieges, raids and conspiracies. King Philip when a mere boy had been entangled by his Ministers in the Thirty Years' War, and when he was a grown man he had not sense or resolution enough to shake himself and his kingdom free. In 1635 Richelieu, after securing the co-operation of the Dutch, had opened his great attack on 'the House of Austria.' If ever there was 'a far-flung line' assailed throughout its whole length, it was the limit of the Spanish Habsburg monarchy. And seeing that it would attempt to protect itself everywhere, at the unessential as much as at the vital points, its forces were everywhere weak. That the barrier was not broken down far sooner was due to two causes.

The enemies of Spain tried to attack everything at once, and therefore scattered their forces widely, with the result that they also were nowhere strong enough to overpower. Even on the frontier of Catalonia, where they had the help of a revolt of the Catalans, the operations of the French were on a peddling scale and the

vital parts of the monarchy were in but little danger, whatever its enemies might do on that north-east corner of the peninsula. In ancient days in Spain knights and squires were fond of a 'Jêrrid' game of javelin throwing from horseback. The target was so constructed that it would stand long hammering all round its circumference, but if it were struck on the bull's eye it collapsed into mere spars lying in a heap. We shall see that there was a bull's eye where a killing blow could be given—that the French did strike at it, and what they made of the venture. But there is another remark which must not be omitted. Such successes as the Spaniards gained (which were more numerous than the world has cared to remember) could be accounted for on the most practical grounds. The 'tercios' employed to garrison Italy and the Netherlands, as well as the Italian, German, Flemish and Irish regiments in Spanish pay, were permanent bodies of soldiers. The French and the Dutch were in the habit of sending large numbers, even the majority, of their men home when the armies went into winter quarters, which was a good half of the year. By this device they saved money, but at a severe cost. It was not always found easy, or even possible, to get back the men thus disbanded for the winter. Raw recruits had to be scraped together to replace them. The permanent regiments in the Dutch service—English, Scots and Germans as well as the French Gendarmerie, not then police, but heavy cavalry—were quite equal to the King of Spain's best troops. But they went into the field hampered by a large element of 'raw recruitees,' or of men who were soldiers on and off. The average of efficiency and of military spirit would be likely to be better on the side of the Old Bandes. The Marquis de Montglas, a typical soldier of that age—in summer in the field, and during the winter at Court—and the Duc d'Aumâle, who has written of these wars in our time, agree that the Spaniards and their fellow soldiers, German and Walloon, were of better quality when a whole army was to be compared to another.

Now we can rejoin our official historian and with him 'condescend' (in the old Scots sense) on that bull's eye in the game of 'Bohordo,' where a blow might have been fatal to Spain. This was, and is, the northern frontier of Spanish Navarre. Defeats in the Low Countries were no great matter; even Rocroi, though it lowered the prestige of the Spanish soldier, did small material damage. Defeats in Italy meant even less. But a serious overthrow in Navarre would have opened the way to the heart of the monarchy. By the western passes of the Pyrenees, by Arlaban to Vittoria, thence to Miranda del Ebro,

and so on to Burgos and the table-land of Castile—that is the great road for our invasion. The Black Prince had proved as much and Napoleon demonstrated the truth in his day. Not that the route is easy to follow. Henri IV.'s maxim must be quoted again. Spain is a difficult country to invade. If you go with a small army you are beaten, and if you go with a large one you starve. Still, obstacles can be overcome, and we may be sure that if an army sent by Richelieu had reached Burgos, the Government of Philip IV. would have been brought to its knees. It is, of course, a palpable truth that the occupation of Navarre is the indispensable preliminary to an advance to Burgos. The Navarrese hills make a natural fortress and an invader might be beaten back. He would certainly be delayed. But in all wars it must needs come to this: that when you have taken all the wisest measures possible, you may still be beaten on a stricken field. But is that any reason for not trying to get there by the right way? It is certain that you will not get there by the wrong way.

All these critical remarks, being so self-evidently true as they are, suggested themselves to the minds of King Philip and his Ministers in the early summer of 1638, when his officers on the frontier began to send him warning that a French army was collecting at Bordeaux, apparently for the purpose of playing the Spaniards a return match for an inroad they had made some time before into Guyenne. The command was to be held by the Prince of Condé—not the great Condé, who was as yet not ripe for the leadership of a whole army, but his father, whom we can easily get to know from the Memoirs of Mme. de Motteville and a dozen other sources. The Marquis de Montglas makes an observation which reveals his opinion of this high and royally born gentleman. It is that Condé, though well practised in politics, was, well—not a thunderbolt of war. If 'politics' mean Court intrigue, the praise is deserved. In the course of the coming campaign, His Highness showed a regard for his personal safety not compatible with a claim to be an 'Alcides in the field.' He differed in that, and other ways, from his son who, whatever else he was or was not, was a fire-eater. At Madrid and in Court circles there was a general agreement that the approach of a French army with a prince of the blood at its head was clear proof that something very serious was in preparation. There arose a grave agitation about the person of Philip IV. and the important question what course was becoming to him at this crisis. Some there were who held that Kings of Spain had ever set a gallant example when their realm was assailed. A few of them were so stupid (or so malicious) as to quote

Philip II. as an example. That quill-driving monarch did on a very few occasions follow an army at a safe distance. From their point of view, it appeared manifestly correct that the King should at least move in the direction of the seat of war. But others held a different opinion. They said that to play the King was to make a move which ought not to be wasted on the beginning of a campaign. To be sure, if the King of France had come himself, then indeed it would be 'decente,' common civility on the part of his brother King, and also brother-in-law, at Madrid, to meet him. Considering that Condé was only a prince of the blood, it would be enough to send one of the distinguished nobility in Philip's service to receive him. That their King, who had no faculty whatever for generalship, would be a mere incumbrance at headquarters and that the country could not afford to have him killed, or, what would have been much worse, captured, was a common-sense view which might be acted on, but must not be avowed.

Of course, Philip did not go to the front; partly, at least, for a reason which nobody in office cared to name. They all knew how ill-prepared they were to meet an invasion on the frontier in Navarre. They had assumed that the local militia would be quite equal to meeting any French inroad, and so they would have been, if all that was to be met had been a body of frontiersmen raiding in the mediæval fashion. But here was an army coming, horse, foot and artillery. The Jesuit letters written in those months reveal the anxiety, the downright terror, prevailing in and about the Court. A paroxysm of hurry raged in the official world. The hereditary Lord High Admiral, who was also Captain-General of Castile, was sent off to take the superior command on the spot. A new and, as all hoped, better Viceroy of Aragon was appointed to co-operate with him. Money was sent, and officers who were 'pretending' at Madrid, 'half-pays' who got no pay and were humbly petitioning for what was due to them, were dug out and sent down by the score. Orders to put walls in repair, to trench mountain passes and make abattis, came rattling down like hailstorms. All else was forgotten at Madrid while the population stood agog to hear what was going to happen. The Spaniards might take bad news from Italy, Flanders or the sea, frivolously. But Navarre was the gate of Castile, and when there was a risk that it might be forced open by the French all the world grew very serious.

There was no question as to the reality of the danger. When the Prince of Condé did reach the frontier he found it most open to attack. Some of the mountain passes in the western Pyrenees were fortified and

held by the Navarrese country people led by their squires. Condé did not think it necessary to try whether he could not force these posts. Nor was there any reason why he should. The Bidassoa is fordable at low tide. All he had to do was to cross it below Irun, turn the scattered Spanish defences and overrun the country. And so he did. The naval force which covered him on the sea side, under the command of Richelieu's clerical admiral, Sourdis, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, captured Spanish galleons in Pasages and destroyed others at Guetaria. French soldiers occupied villages unopposed by the surprised and scattered militia. It seemed inevitable that much worse would follow. But the *cosas de España* have ever defied probability and commonsense. This promising start only led to an overthrow as unexpected by Richelieu, and as maddening to him as the capture of Dupont's corps at Baylen was to be to Napoleon one hundred and seventy years later.

In fact the case of Spain in 1638, like its successor in 1808, was not so bad as it looked. Condé's inroad was essentially one of the peddling operations so common in the wars of that time—one of those campaigns with small forces which could not do more than take a fort or town and then stop. His twelve thousand horse and foot were not equal to following up a preliminary success, and as for Condé, it would be an insult to old women to call him one. All that was really needed to bring him to a stop was the presence in some walled place on his road of a Spaniard of the type of those who were to defend Saragossa and Gerona in the Peninsular War, one who would see it through to the end and give time for relief to be got together and to act. Now Fuenterrabia was exactly the necessary place, and the governor in command when the French appeared—the captain Domingo de Eguia—was the right stamp of man. The official governor, the Maese de Campo Christobal Mexia Bocanegra, was not there, but his *locum tenens* did what was needed. To hold an honourable post, to stay about the Court yourself and discharge your duty by deputy, was no more unusual in Spain than it was in England for many a long day. Bocanegra had in fact no share in the defence. He came from the Court to Navarre, but remained outside forwarding reliefs as well as he could. He was replaced by Miguel Perez de Egea, a Maese de Campo, who slipped in after the siege was begun and took up the command with skill and resolution. But the adventure was reserved for Domingo de Eguia — the historian uses the very language of the books of chivalry. Don Miguel was mortally wounded while directing a sortie. The captain stepped once more into the place of governor, and held

it with indomitable spirit till the long-delayed relief did at last come.

The slothful movement of their friends outside can have been no surprise to the garrison of eight hundred soldiers and townsmen who held Fuenterrabia. Help from Spain comes late or never. *Socorro de España ó tarde llega ó nunca* was a common saying of her soldiers and a truthful. Their part was to hold out till all had been done that men could do. They would at any rate see to it that Condé did not take Fuenterrabia in eight days, and San Sebastian in another eight, and then overrun Navarre. Such, they were told, were his orders from Richelieu and he meant to carry them out. In the spirit, if not the very words, of Don Quixote's favourite phrase—*Ahora lo veredes dijo Agrajes*—now shalt thou see, said Agrajes—the garrison hardened their hearts to give Condé his kale through the reek.

The defence succeeded because it was physically possible for men, who had the spirit and skill to make small means do great service, to hold out for long. On the river front, indeed, there was no wall, only a high bank; but it was well stockaded, and the approach was covered by a deepish pool called the Concha—the Shell. On the land side the town was surrounded by massive walls and bastions, built by the orders of Charles V. They were, says the loyal historian, as high and as strong as the heart of the monarch who made them. A sufficiency of food and ammunition was not lacking. Guns to add to those already there were hurried in at the last moment. By a touch of truly Spanish management they were sent in without carriages. The soldiers and townsmen knocked up what would serve the turn. It is the fact that in the early part of the siege bodies (small but useful) of volunteers did contrive to slip in and to bring some stores. They did the feat by wading and swimming on the river front. Among them, it is satisfactory to be able to note, was a body of 'valiant Irishes,' a detachment from an Irish regiment in the service of the Catholic King. Our author makes wild work of the names of their officers. David Barri—an easy word for the Spaniards to master—presents no difficulty. But was any Irish gentleman ever called Xaralan? Was it Callahan? They fought well, but it is not necessary to insist on that. After a time, the French Admiral, Archbishop Sourdis, became more active on the river. The sands were trenched on either side, and these adventures became ever more difficult and more rarely successful. There is a blot on the fair fame of the Spanish defenders—that there were men of Belial, inside or outside the town, who found means to warn the French when a relief party was about to make a dash.

These trifling reinforcements

were to be sure worth having, but they were not enough to drive the French off. On the contrary, they succeeded in the course of July in carrying their trenches so far forward that it was clear to Miguel Perez de Egea that they would soon be in a position to drain the foss and mine his walls. Therefore in addition to doing his best to provide inner defences behind the walls, he hit out with all the force he could dispose of. Sorties (in one of which he himself was killed) were made to damage the French works. Irishmen, Spaniards and townsmen, all picked men to the number of four hundred or so, would rush out and fall on, killing as many of the enemy as they could get at, levelling trenches and spiking guns. These feats were performed at a cost, and the garrison—soldiers and townsmen—was steadily diminished. Of course, too, they were not the only sufferers. The townsmen—vecinos—who were by law and ancient usage part of the garrison, were the householders, who paid 'scot and lot.' There were others known as 'moradores,' residents, as was but natural. The vecino had his family, and there were men and women in the town who did not rent a house or own one. A time must come when *sorties* grow to be impossible, because the loss of life in the garrison leaves the numbers insufficient for such ventures. The end of all sorties is to be driven in, and the time comes when the besiegers can touch the body of the place. Miguel Perez and his men knew that this time must come for them before very long. So they prepared to fight from house to house and street to street when the wall was breached and the French were inside. The Spaniards, with their long experience of trenching, digging in, mining and countermining in the Low Country wars—mainly made up of such operations as they were—passed for particularly good at the game.

The hope of being able to prolong the defence for a long time was somewhat desperate, for the French began shelling the town on what was then considered a great scale, with ten, a dozen or fourteen mortars. The historian, after making a philosophic reflection, goes on to tell of the effect of the bombardment.

"On this day we began to suffer from and make acquaintance with the great evil of the bombs, one of the most crafty and violent means which the ingenuity of man has invented for his own destruction, seeking even to destroy over above the natural ways of making an end. (What would the good man have said of poisoned gas, bombing from the air and torpedoes?) On some days the French brought into action twelve, fourteen or sixteen mortars, wherewith in a very short time they beat down most of the houses, tormenting townsmen, soldiers and residents,

who could find no place of safety outside the church, the hospital and other strongly built houses—even there they were not safe, for there was no building strong enough to resist the violence (of the bombs). One fell in the hospital, and though by God's particular providence it hurt none of the sick or wounded, it was necessary to carry them into the cellars of the castle."

Things like this we know must be at every famous siege. It would be quite easy to fill pages with the names of 'caballeros' who shone in the imminent deadly breach, or fought in sorties manfully; of Jesuits who had no scruple in using musket or half-pike; of parish priests blown to pieces by bombs. One of those who was most forward in the breach or beyond it we do indeed know by sight. Adrian Pulido Pareja is in the National Gallery on the canvas of Velasquez, a thick-set, shaggy, defiant-looking figure, a human being who is amazingly like a Highland bull glowering at you on a hillside. It is easy to believe that when the worst had all but come to the worst, he stood, half-pike in hand, in the breach and sent down one Frenchman after another who tried to force his way in. The story of a siege, even a famous one, can be very dull, but there was a large element of gentlemen volunteers among the defenders of Fuenterrabia whose prowess had a fair chance of being recorded; the fierce tug of besieger with besieged went on in a small ring, where what all men did each at his own post was visible, or at least was soon known to all. The enemies saw one another across short spaces and within hailing distance. What you may call, if you are so pleased, Homeric defiances passed to and fro. Flytings would be a better name. Need it be added that as there were Irishmen in the garrison they were well to the fore in military eloquence. I cannot say that the examples given compel quotation. They are but variations, even of a rather monotonous order, on, "We'll have your skin," "Take care we don't have yours." Our author does not even enable us to be sure which military wit had the credit of the taunt or retort. In the case of the Irish, we are left all but wholly in the dark. Our author gives up struggling with the surnames, and tells only of the active hand or tongue of Don Daniel and Don Terencio—Dan and Terence. He cannot be absolutely correct even with the names of Irish regiments. Tyrconel is correct, but he might have done better, one can but think, with Tyrone than write it 'Tirol.'

From the end of June all through July and August and into September, the story of bombardments, sorties, mines—which sometimes blow out backwards, and the French are more hurt by them than the Spaniards, and at others make breaches—goes on. Three hundred of the garrison—which, reinforcements included, can

never have amounted to as many as twelve hundred—were killed first and last. The wounded were many. The women of Fuenterrabia, and the very children, had to help, repairing by night what damage the French did by day. No driving was needed to keep the women up to the mark. They were eager to help and ready to assert that they were in no more danger with their men than they would have been hiding under roofs and beside walls which might be brought down on them at any moment by bombs.

Yet, however resolute the defence may be, a town besieged is a town taken sooner or later, if no help comes from without. By the last days of August it was becoming plain that Fuenterrabia was getting near, indeed, to the end of its tether. If Domingo de Eguia had surrendered in the middle of August, he would already have done as much as the code of honour required of any governor of a besieged place. His defence was, indeed, prolonged to the point where it was becoming contumacious and might be held to deprive him of the right to expect quarter. So the Prince of Condé thought. Considering the matter in the safe and comfortable quarters he reserved for himself on the north side of the Bidassoa, well out of range of the fire of the town, he held a council of war. The outcome of the consultation was the decision to send in 'a trumpet' with a letter. In this document the governor was seriously warned that his defence was being prolonged out of all reason, that common humanity ought to show him how cruel it was to subject the townsfolk to the horrors of a storm which must now needs succeed when the French held all the country around and the walls were crumbling. Domingo de Eguia also held a council of war, and supported by his officers together with the goodwill of the townsmen, he sent an answer in proper form. In substance, what the correct language of the reply came to was that if there was no other way to end the struggle, then the gentlemen, soldiers and burghers who held the town for the King of Spain would rather fight it out till they were all killed than deserve to be hanged as traitors.

One has to come to the conclusion that Condé was by no means sure of his power to storm the town before relief could come. He went back to sap and battery and after more of this wearing down process he sent in another summons—a repetition of the last, in pretty much the same words. This time he received an answer which he was bound to take as final.

"The Maese de Campo Domingo de Eguia, &c.

"The letter of His Highness the Prince of Condé, dated this 3rd of September, has been received from the hand of his Trumpet, and when communicated to the authorities

of the town, the serjeant-majors and captains within the same, they reply: that in order to hold the place they have no need of any help by men, nor of provision from without, nor do they look to receive any. Your Highness can make all the assaults he pleases, for here we are resolved to await them.

"God preserve Your Highness."

After that Condé had but one course to take—to order the assault and make his threats good. He did order the assault; but as for the threats—well, his men went for wool and came back shorn. Soldiers, gentlemen, volunteers, townsmen, priests and women on the Spanish side just fought it out in the spirit needed by the facts of the case. Death might come, but they would meet it fighting.

The extremity was not indeed far off when the royal army did raise the siege at long last. Nothing can show more convincingly that a paralysis of the will was growing in Spain, together with the exhaustion of its material resources, than the fact that it took King Philip's Government three full months to collect an army capable of driving off about 15,000 invaders. The essential vice in the position of the monarchy was curiously shown by an incident which occurred in these months. A squadron of galleons and some soldiers were ready to sail to Brazil when the Prince of Condé crossed the Bidassoa and Sourdis' French fleet became active in a destructive way on the north coast of Spain. Members of the council, who were guided by common-sense, argued that their forces were needed nearer home than on the western side of the Atlantic. On the other hand, sage councillors were not lacking who could point out that, for the dignity of the empire, Brazil must be protected. The tiresome pedantry of the age was, as always, 'in evidence.' The King was reminded that Rome had despatched legions on foreign service while Hannibal was encamped at the gate of the city. There are truths which must not be let out by wise men. The councillors at Madrid cannot, without a breach of charity, be blamed for not saying *totidem verbis* that it would be too dangerous to offend the Portuguese by appearing to neglect their Brazilian colony. Portugal cared a great deal for its sugar-growing colony and nothing at all for the safety of Castile. A rebellion had broken out there already and well-informed men in Madrid must have known that another was always possible. The actual revolt of 1640, which broke up the unity of the monarchy, was no surprise to the Count Duke of Olivares, who had been trying to avert it by futilities. History affords few better examples of what comes of acting in the faith that any territory is worth taking, though it taxes your resources to hold the thing and your annexation increases the number of your enemies.

Soldiers were sent to Brazil lest Portugal should be offended. Meanwhile the Spanish garrison at Lisbon, the one security the King had that the Portuguese would not revolt, had to be drawn off to defend the northern frontier of Spain. Two years later Portugal broke away without having to make a fight. Of all Philip II. thought he had gained by enforcing his claim (which was, after all, open to dispute) to the crown of Portugal, nothing remained to his descendants but the fortress of Ceuta.

If floods of words, streams of despatches, consultations of 'Juntas,' endless references to headquarters at Madrid, had possessed any virtue, Fuenterrabia ought to have been freed of its French besiegers long before the middle of September. The King did everything he could, except give up wasting money on shows, and put himself at the head of his army. He urged all men to exert themselves to save the place, telling them that he would never forgive his servants if Fuenterrabia were lost by their negligence and lack of spirit. A rousing summons to all 'hidalgos' to gird on their swords and mount their horses to ride with the King was duly issued. Some came. Most did not. They did not openly rebel, but they shirked. If they appeared at the rendezvous one day, it was only to melt away on the next. By himself mounting his horse—and he was fond of riding—and putting on the black mail in which he was painted by Velasquez, for actual service, Philip could certainly have done no harm. But, one can see, his subjects were becoming tired of being called upon for sacrifices for "the most august House of Austria," when its head in Spain was dawdling in his palace of the Retiro, 'The Retreat,' at Madrid. They were losing their reverence for the Lord's anointed, and were getting into a state of mind to laugh consumedly when some wag posted up a pasquinade to the effect that while "the King of France was in the field the King of Spain was in hiding" in El Retiro.

Still the need was so pressing that something must be done. It was impossible to let Fuenterrabia perish without an effort to save it. So men were scraped together—Irish regiments, Tyrconel, Tyrone, and a new corps landed at Corunna, Neapolitans, and the King's Spanish Guard, of which Olivares was the Colonel-General. The frontier of Catalonia was uncovered to protect Navarre. The Spanish monarchy was for ever trying to lengthen the blanket by cutting off a strip at one end and sewing it on the other. At all costs an army was collected under the commandership-in-chief of the Lord High Admiral—Henriquez de Cabrera. To these soldiers were added Navarrese and Basque militia. Even so, it is very doubtful whether the whole body exceeded the French twelve or fourteen thousand. Five thousand five hundred of

the Admiral's army were trained soldiers; all the others were militia or frontier guerilleros. Condé and his advisers did none the less think that the host gathering to attack was serious. They drew in all outlying detachments, even from Irun on their left flank, and concentrated to meet the coming onfall. They could be in no doubt as to what they had to expect. Spanish detachments occupied the tops of neighbouring hills, and from them made signals—the pillar of smoke by day, and the fire by night, to encourage the garrison. The French could see them quite as well as the Spaniards and knew just as well what the purport of their messages must be. As the last desperate push to storm the town at the eleventh hour failed, the French besiegers waited for the advance of the relieving force.

What happened when that advance did come is among the oddities of war. The Spanish staff had characteristically decided to choose the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, 8th September, for the final operation. Seeing that the Catholic cause was at stake, and, moreover, the French were so unscrupulous as to allow Huguenots to serve in their ranks, it was to be piously expected that Our Lady would do something effective to forward true religion. This looked the more probable because a certain Calvinist chaplain to a Huguenot corps was rejoicing his heart and his regiment by preaching hot-gospelling sermons, denouncing the Antichrist of Rome and the idolatrous mass, within the jurisdiction of the Inquisition. Perhaps the failure of their hopes may have sown the seeds of unbelief in a few of the Spaniards, but most probably not. They were too good *Cristianos* to fail to understand that they had shown themselves unworthy of divine aid by their sins. However that may be, it is a recorded fact that flood gates were opened, hail and rain came down in spouts, the thunder rolled in the hills and lightning flashed all round. The gentle mountain stream murmuring softly at 8 A.M. was a raging torrent, a regular spate by 4 P.M. Some men and more horses were actually drowned. The hardened soldiers of the 'old bands' stood firm. So did the gentlemen volunteers, under the influence no doubt of the 'White's Window' of their day, the *pundonor* of a *caballero*. But the recent local levies could not bear up against the drenching and the rapid fall in the temperature which goes with it. These 'besoños' simply bolted to cover. They would have faced the French, but could not stand being drowned and frozen. The relieving army was for some days washed out.

The interval spent in drying and rallying the runaways was also largely devoted to more writing for orders to Madrid. The capacity of Spanish officials to think and act for themselves was becoming very weak.

There is so little to be said in praise of Philip V. that one finds a certain pleasure in being able to record that on this occasion he antedated the famous answer of the Austrian Field-Marshal Loudon of the Seven Years' War. When one of his subordinates, being ordered to attack, sent an aide-de-camp to report that the rain was damping his gunpowder, the Field-Marshal replied, "Go to your general and tell him that the rain is also falling on the Prussians." The King did actually write to his generals that the French had been rained on too—and go on they must or he would know the reason why.

At long last they did fall on, and as usual their men followed them heartily. The Duke of Wellington, who was nowise partial to the Spaniards, confessed that he never saw the least disinclination on the part of the men to engage. If they fought ill, it was because their officers had no confidence in themselves or in one another. This dreadful lack of the true military spirit has been a curse to Spain at many periods and was more and more at work in the seventeenth century. But the day in which they did at last strike to rescue Fuenterrabia was not a bad one. The officers led well, and their men came on roundly. And the fight, how did it go? Well, there was no fight. Except a few of the cavalry at the extreme outposts, the whole French besieging army took to its heels and bolted to the fords. The Marquis de Montglas is explicit, and Sourdis says the same, that the French soldiers fled without striking a blow. It really was a case when the "Gods of Fear and of Flight" laid hold, and caused a true 'Panic Terror.' The runaways threw down pikes and muskets and gave themselves for a prey and a spoil to their enemies. Fifteen hundred of the poor wretches were cruelly butchered — probably rather by the Navarrese frontiersmen, whose century-old rule was that the more Frenchmen you kill the fewer will be left, than by the regulars. Among those who were not killed but taken by the soldiers was the Calvinist preacher. Our historian grows almost bitter when he has to record that the heretic was allowed to escape before he could be hanged and burnt as he deserved.

There is no particular interest in dwelling on the tale of rewards given by the King of Spain and the punishments Richelieu would have inflicted if he could. The fact that Condé was much too high and well-born to be brought to trial must have added to his natural annoyance. Nor can he have been soothed when Marshal Villette, whom he meant to behead as an example, got warning in time and was smart enough to escape to England, where he remained till the Cardinal's death made it safe for him to return to France.

FROM THE OUTPOSTS.

THE MOTUVERA TRANSPORT COMPANY, LTD.

BY 'TARANGA.'

If you go down to the beach of the long bay or inlet which runs up into the western shore of Motuvera Island and look across its waters, you will see an object in the middle of it which looks out of place. The inlet is fringed with a belt of white sand, gleaming snowily in the sunlight and backed with waving dark-green palms. A few coral rocks break its blue surface and stud its edges. There is nothing in sight which suggests man's presence or handiwork except that smooth, slightly convex object, rising out of the water some twenty-five yards from the beach, of a regular, straight-edged and oblong shape such as nature could not have designed. Whitened with sea-salt and fringed with weed round the edges, it is nevertheless plain that the object must have originally been black and probably shiny. Ask any passer-by for an explanation, and he will tell you—fluently if he happen to be a white man, and with laboured circumlocutions if he be a native—that the thing in the water is the motor-lorry which once belonged to the Motuvera Transport Company. Naturally your next question will be, "How did it get there?" This story is the answer.

"What this place wants," said Davis Anderson, tilting back his chair until it looked as if his fall on to the verandah floor were inevitable, "is *transport.*"

Christopher Baillie, the schoolmaster, shook his head and refilled his glass.

"Don't forget you've got a guest," said Anderson severely, pushing forward his own glass; "also that it's darned thirsty work trying to knock ideas of progress into your head."

Baillie apologised and opened another bottle of beer. He was a young man, little and quiet, with a shock of fair hair perpetually on end, giving him the appearance of a startled yet still sociable cockatoo. His was a lonely life, and why, out of the few white men on Motuvera, he had made friends with Davis Anderson, a loud-voiced and expansive person, was a mystery. Anderson was an American fruit-trader, the owner of a small schooner called the *Sally*, which plied between Motuvera, Rarotonga and New Zealand; and whenever his craft anchored in the lagoon his first journey on shore was almost always up to Baillie's little house in search of a drink and a talk.

"Well," said the school-

master, "what do you mean by transport, or rather by a need for it here? What's wrong with the *Sally*?"

"I don't mean external transport," replied Anderson; "I mean internal."

"What of and where to?"

"Say, listen to me. There may not appear to you to be much to transport in this dead-and-alive hole, but an observant guy like me sees possibilities in some things that other folks miss. Have you never walked along the road between here and the village and seen the women carrying their baskets of cocoanuts and mandarins, or the men humping fish? That's what you see every day—and there's something to transport. Then what about when lumber comes out of a ship to build a house or anything of that sort? And do you remember last fall, when Judge Howard's pianner arrived, how many men it took to get it up to his house?"

"Yes; but those are exceptional cases, except for the fruit and fish, and them the people here have always been used to carry for themselves."

"The point," said Anderson, "is not what folks can manage for themselves, but what they'll be glad to have someone else do for them. Then there's another thing: it takes you half an hour's walk to get to that tin shack where you bully the piccaninnies, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"And how long to get to the wharf, or the church, or the court-house?"

"About——"

"Exactly," went on the trader quickly; "and wouldn't you be glad to have someone offer you a ride instead of having to hike it?"

"I don't know," said Baillie. "I like walking."

"That don't signify any. Plenty other folks just hate it."

"Well, what's all this leading up to? Have you got an idea for dealing with what you call a lack of transport here?"

"I sure have. I tell you, Chris," said Anderson, absently emptying the beer bottle into his glass, "if I don't make the whole outfit of you on Motuvera sit up and smile, my name isn't Davis Lee Anderson. You just watch me."

His host gazed at him in a puzzled manner, as though expecting him to perform an immediate conjuring trick.

"Next month," explained Anderson, "I'm going to Auckland by the steamer to fix up a new deal for my next cargo. And when I get back you're going to see sparks."

Motuvera boasts a lagoon which a ship of considerable size can enter, through a passage in the reef immediately opposite the only village on the island of any importance. When the ship has anchored, any mails or stores to be landed, from small parcels to balks of timber, must be transferred to the lighters which bring them to the jetty. Inland from the

wharf lies the village, bisected by the only road on the island, which runs from end to end of it, a distance of about six miles, following its southern shore. Along it are situated all the important buildings—the church, hall, school and warehouses. Mr Howard, the British Resident and general representative on Motuvera of law and order, lived a short way up a side road; Mr Garraway, the missionary, lived near the church, and Dr Sullivan next door to him. Only Christopher Baillie, preferring a picturesque situation and something of a view to the convenience of being near the school, had built his small dwelling at the very end of the island and the road, nearly two miles from the centre of the village.

The arrival of the monthly steamer from New Zealand was always something of an event to the inhabitants of an island where so little of moment happened. Before the ship in which Anderson returned from Auckland had negotiated the passage in the reef, most of the population, brown and white, had gathered on the jetty or on the end of the wharf to watch the familiar but fascinating process of casting anchor, discharging cargo and unloading the lighters at the wharf-side. It was a day so typically beautiful that no native of the island would have given it a thought. Wherever the eye turned it was met by rich colour, whether of dark, almost purple sea, blue sky without a cloud, or deep luxuriant green of the feathery palm-trees. Above the woods the great peak of the old volcano which gave the island its name glowed a golden red, and below them the dazzlingly white walls of the houses in the village dimmed the glitter of the sands along the beach. In the lagoon the slender pale-green hull of the *Sally* floated like a drifted petal. The sunshine was warm without being oppressive, and a gentle breeze off the sea whispered softly among the ironwood trees along the shore, the topmost note of the medley of sounds which, ranging through the chatter of the crowd and the faint clanking of the steamer's winches, ended in the never-ceasing bass of the breakers on the reef half a mile out.

"There seems to be a lot of stuff going into those last two lighters," observed Mr Howard to his wife, as they watched the ship from the window of the small wooden building at the end of the wharf dignified by the name of the Harbour-Master's Office. "They *are* taking a long time to load them."

Mr Garraway, standing on the wharf, had just made much the same remark to Dr Sullivan.

"It looks to me," said Mrs Howard, whose eyes were sharper than her husband's, "as if they were tying them together."

"Whatever for?"

Mrs Howard could not think.

"What's that swinging on

the derrick?" asked Mr Garraway.

"It appears to be the Father of All Packing-cases," replied Dr Sullivan drily. "I wonder whose it is."

A cheer rose from the white-clad throng on the shore as the great oblong mass which was arousing so much speculation was settled gingerly on to the two lighters. When the latter finally cast off and approached the wharf, it became clear that the reason for lashing them together had been that no single lighter could have contained the bulk or supported the weight of the mysterious crate, in which was a vast irregular-shaped object, swathed in canvas. The crowd's curiosity was increased when Davis Anderson was seen standing in the bows of one of the lighters with an evident air of ownership. Only Christopher Baillie, on the fringe of the crowd, felt a vague suspicion as to the crate's contents, mingled with a vaguer foreboding.

"What have you got there, Mr Anderson?" inquired Mr Howard from the door of the Harbour-Master's Office, as the trader stepped ashore.

"Pardon me, Judge," replied Anderson, raising his broad Panama hat. "I intend everyone to know before long, but you'll excuse me if for the moment I keep this proposition of mine a secret."

Mr Howard looked disappointed and Mrs Howard even more so; the crowd of spectators almost groaned. But Anderson took no notice. The *Sally's* crew, who had been waiting on the edge of the wharf, began to haul the huge crate ashore on to rollers, and innumerable chattering volunteers joined in, all hoping to gain some clue to its contents. With the help, supervision or encouragement of most of the population of the village the crate was rolled laboriously to Anderson's warehouse, where, to the disgust of his assistants, the doors were closed and padlocked upon the enigma.

The island, actually administered by the Government of New Zealand, was in theory ruled by an old man called Manaia, who lived in solitary and simple state in the middle of the village. He was a stout, cheerful and benevolent person, in whom the dignity inherent in most island chiefs had waned with the advance of age. He wore shabby European clothes of a pale-brown cotton and a battered straw hat, except on ceremonial occasions. To him Anderson applied for a private interview the day after the arrival and departure of the steamer, and they had a long talk in the small bungalow where the chief lived.

"What I want from you," he said, speaking fluently the local dialect of Polynesian, "is your help and encouragement."

Manaia rubbed his chin and looked thoughtful.

"But why, Anahona?" he said. "I think your idea a

very good one, and you should do well with it. Why should you want any help from me?"

"All I want," said the trader, "is for you to encourage your people to use what I am offering them. Use it yourself; I shall charge *you* nothing. But what I am afraid of is that the people may be shy—or frightened—of something so new to them as this will be."

The chief's face cleared. He had had an uncomfortable feeling that Anderson wanted something out of him more solid than patronage and less easy to part with.

"Most certainly," he said, grinning widely. "I shall be there when you start and often afterwards. I shall find it very useful myself, I feel sure."

Next day such of the inhabitants of Motuvera as happened to pass Anderson's warehouse stopped and gathered excitedly round a large poster, flaming in red, blue and yellow letters, which was mounted on the door. It ran as follows:

"This is to give notice that the Motuvera Transport Company, Limited, will commence the running of a Coach Service on the Main Road of the Island to-morrow, Monday, September the Fifteenth. Passengers will be carried at a Flat Rate of Twopence a Head for the Whole Journey from Three Trees Point to Mr Christopher Baillie's house, or intermediately. Mail and Packages up to any Reasonable Size will also be carried. Special Terms for Fruit and Fish. The Favor of your Patronage is Confidently Solicited."

Few of those who saw this notice, even those of them who could read English, could gather any inkling of what it was about. 'Fruit and Fish' were easy words, but their context was bewildering. Nobody knew what a 'Coach' was, and 'Patronage' sounded sinister.

When Dr Sullivan came by he was appealed to for an explanation. He read the notice with interest, but, not having been long in the islands, found himself unequal to the task of translating it. Seeing, however, an addition to the main part of the notice, in smaller lettering, he was able to advise the now considerable crowd to be present at the "Grand Opening of the Company's Transport Line at 9.30 A.M. at the Wharf, by His Honour Judge Howard, Representative in Motuvera of his Britannic Majesty King George V."

The composition of this manifesto, with its grandiloquent conclusion, which seemed to imply that but for engagements elsewhere His Britannic Majesty would himself have been present to perform the opening ceremony, had cost Davis Anderson much mental effort and he was extremely proud of it. Christopher Baillie approved, but ventured to object to the omission of a 'u' in the word 'favor.' Anderson ignored this pedantry, and only pressed Baillie to give his pupils a holiday on the

morrow and bring them all to the Grand Opening.

Punctually at half-past nine Mr and Mrs Howard appeared at the wharf. The Resident was in a state of good-humoured enthusiasm, declaring that a man who showed such public spirit as Davis Anderson should have all the support possible. (The trader had enlisted his whole-hearted encouragement at another private interview the previous day.) A considerable crowd was collected at the wharf, where a certain length of the road had been roped off. With a forbearance unusual in crowds, the people had gathered behind the ropes and not between them. A great but repressed excitement pervaded the throng. Only the whites had any idea of what was to happen, but the roped roadway suggested to all that some sort of procession was on the programme.

As Mr Howard reached the wharf, Anderson's native bosun fired a revolver into the air, evidently as something between a salute and a signal, and the excitement became intense. There was a pause, and then from the direction of Anderson's warehouse came a series of spluttering sounds, followed by a loud pulsating roar. Before the astonished eyes of the crowd there emerged into the roadway a large motor-lorry, the driver's seat and the front half of the body roofed in, the rest open, and the whole vehicle fluttering with brightly-coloured ribbons. Along its black-painted sides blazed large yellow letters, "The Motuvera Transport Company, Ltd.," and in smaller type, "Davis Lee Anderson, Manager. Manaia Ariki, Patron." In the driver's seat sat Davis Anderson himself, his broad face flushed and perspiring, and beside him, evidently shaking with nervousness, was Manaia, clad in spotless white ducks, with a garland of flowers round his neck. The lorry moved slowly along the road towards Mr Howard.

For a moment the assembly stood its ground and gazed in awe-struck silence. But when Anderson signified his triumphant arrival with a sharp blast on the horn and simultaneously the lorry gave vent to a sudden earth-shaking back-fire, the shock was too much for the islanders. As one man they broke and fled in all directions with loud shrieks. There remained, besides the little group of whites, only Manaia (who would have fled with his people had he been able to open the door of the driver's cab) and his son Tuanui, who, partly from native courage and partly perhaps from curiosity to see what fate was about to overtake his respected parent, stood firm and continued to watch the scene.

Mr Howard collected himself, stifling his laughter, and stepped forward to shake Anderson by the hand.

"Congratulations, Mr Anderson."

"Thank you, Judge," said the Manager of the Motuvera Transport Company, dismounting from his seat and wiping his brow with a large red handkerchief. "I don't know what's bitten the rest of the congregation, but maybe they'll be back before long." His tone betrayed his wounded feelings.

"Never mind, Mr Anderson. You're doing a good work, and it will be appreciated." He turned to face the group of spectators and cleared his throat. "I am sure," he went on, raising his voice, "we are all deeply grateful to Mr Davis Anderson for the energy and progressive spirit he has shown in providing a means of transport for our community on Motuvera. This most useful —er—this most magnificent—er—this——"

"Coach," prompted Anderson.

"Coach," accepted Mr Howard doubtfully, "will be a means, I feel confident, of promoting trade between different parts of the island, and a great convenience to all of us. I see that it has accommodation for passengers as well as goods. I wish Mr Anderson every success in his undertaking, and I ask you all to join with me in showing your confidence in his project."

He paused.

"Hip, hip——!" suggested Dr Sullivan, and the audience, glad of the cue, gave three cheers, which made up in spirit for what they lacked in volume.

So the Motuvera Transport Company, Ltd., began its variegated career, and the 'coach' was shorn of the ribbons which had decked it on its first public appearance. At first, though the white traders made use of it, and in spite of the example set by Manaia on the day of the Grand Opening, the natives avoided the lorry in horror and unanimously christened it 'the Dragon.' But when Davis Anderson, before departing on his next voyage in the *Sally*, and having handed over the management of the Company to Bob Crawley, the storekeeper (his only other shareholder), taught Tuanui to drive the 'coach,' and Tuanui actually appeared driving it through the village with a garland round his neck and the widest of grins ornamenting his face — *then* matters changed. By the time the next steamer from Auckland arrived, bringing with it fifty tins of petrol and twenty of oil addressed to Mr Davis Lee Anderson, the Company was going strong, and Crawley was receiving applications for shares in it, all of which, according to his instructions, he steadfastly refused. On none of its journeys was the 'coach' less than half-full, and sometimes Tuanui was compelled to go round armed with his largest spanner and chase the extra passengers off the footboards. As the summer advanced the interior of the passengers' part of the 'coach' developed a strong resemblance to the Black Hole of Calcutta,

for the New Zealand builder of the lorry's body had not allowed for the heat of a tropical climate. Crawley took it upon himself to knock out the sides of the compartment, turning it into an open truck with an awning (the previous roof). After that the Company continued to thrive, and Anderson rubbed his hands with satisfaction when he contemplated his first half-year's profits.

But after six or seven months a noticeable decline set in. The few traders continued to make use of the lorry, though, owing to the smallness of the island and the rarity of visiting ships, they very seldom needed it; and the young people of the white community sometimes boarded it to take them to bathing expeditions in the western inlet. But the natives, after the novelty of this method of travelling had worn off, began to revert to their own feet once more. Tradition dies hard and they were used to walking. Moreover, although it was undoubtedly fun to have a ride occasionally, no sane person, argued they, would spoil the attraction of it by making it a daily indulgence. Besides, how could you stop and converse with the people you passed, as everyone likes to do, if you were whirled past them in a cloud of dust at twenty-five miles an hour? As for saving time, no one but a European would worry about a little thing like that when you could walk from one end of Motuvera to the other in under two hours. Lastly, twopence a time soon came to seem a waste of money and a reduction of fares to one penny a time made only a temporary difference.

Gradually, therefore, the native custom of the Company grew less and less. The Dragon, however, remained popular. Everyone always knocked off work or broke off conversation to see it pass; and at night, when the headlamps bored long golden tunnels through the velvety darkness and the tail-light glowed in the clouds of dust like a red star shining among clouds, Tuanui's passage through the village was always made to a storm of appreciative cheering. But before long only the small children took the trouble to climb into the 'coach,' and, as they had no pennies to spend on fares, Tuanui had either to give them free rides or hunt them out of it. Only Manaia, who paid no fare, remained faithful, claiming always the front seat beside his son by virtue of his rank and of his position as 'Patron' of the Company. By the following spring, when the 'coach' had been running for nearly a year, it had become one of the common sights of Motuvera, vastly popular with everybody, and almost entirely unused for the purpose for which it had been provided. Anderson found that, having just earned the price he had paid for it (it had been very second-hand), it was

now not earning its petrol and oil—not by a long way.

"I can't make it out," mourned he, as he sat one evening on Baillie's verandah. The beer was running short, and the two were drinking the juice of green cocoanuts, a hardship which added to Anderson's gloom. "It all started with a bang, didn't it? It's cheap to the public, isn't it? It's never broken down, has it?"

"I certainly remember it starting with a bang," ventured Baillie.

Anderson glared at him.

"Well, then, why don't these darned niggers use the thing?"

"The trouble is, I think," said Baillie, passing a hand thoughtfully through his upstanding hair, "that this island's too small for the benefit of your Transport Company to be felt. You should have started it on a bigger one."

"There's another thing," pursued Anderson, who had hardly listened to his companion's reply, "that blamed preacher Garraway has been telling the folks that it's sinful to go joy-riding on Sundays. Now what call is there for him to go framing my business by saying a thing like that?"

Baillie shook his head in his usual non-committal way and broke open another cocoanut.

"I tell you, Chris," said the trader, "I'd be glad if anyone would take the thing off my hands. It's losing money right now, and it's going to lose more."

Two days later it happened that Christopher Baillie fell over a tree-root and sprained his ankle badly. Unable to walk, he was for the first time really grateful for the establishment of the Motuvera Transport Company when he found himself able to drive to and from the school behind Tuanui. When Davis Anderson heard of it he expressed sympathy and invited Baillie to supper at his bungalow near the warehouse, promising him that the 'coach' would be available to take him home.

The promise was rash, for it led to a row with Tuanui. His day's work was usually over by nine o'clock (he had a 'relief' for the middle hours of the day) and he resented this extension of it. After a stormy argument, during which Tuanui twice threatened to resign from his post as driver, a thing he would rather have died than do, and his employer promised to skin him with an oyster-shell and peg him out on the reef, the matter was amicably arranged by the surreptitious present from Anderson to Tuanui of a half-bottle of whisky.

Soon after ten o'clock Anderson helped his guest out to the lorry and placed him in the front seat beside Tuanui, who sat somnolently in his place, just visible in the darkness. The trader's last kind thought was to swing the starting-handle of the lorry himself. As the engine roared into life, Tuanui roused himself and

gave a cheerful yell. Only then did Baillie notice the strong aroma of whisky which hung about him. He thought of calling out to Anderson, but with his usual shyness he hesitated too long.

"Good night, Chris!" shouted Anderson. The engine roared louder and louder, but the lorry only moved a few inches: Tuanui had forgotten to release the hand-brake. When he remembered to do so, the lorry shot off down the road with a jerk which flung the passenger against the back of his seat and deprived him of breath for some seconds; it was only equalled by the jerk with which Tuanui halted a few minutes later before Manaia's bungalow, where he performed a raucous fantasia on the horn.

"What are you stopping here for?" asked Baillie.

"Come out, my father! Come out and ride in the Dragon!" chanted Tuanui to the darkness. "Beli and I are going down the road, and the Dragon is flying like a bird. Come out with us, my father!"

The chief had not yet gone to sleep, and accepted his son's invitation with alacrity. He was annoyed to find an intruder in his favourite seat, but climbed without protest on to one of the passengers' benches behind. They set off again at a break-neck pace and Baillie grew alarmed. The lorry hurtled along the road, bumping and swaying from side to side, and occasionally, when Tuanui's high spirits grew beyond control, describing such a serpentine course that the head-lamps threw a fleeting radiance sometimes on a patch of taro or potatoes, sometimes on a grove of orange-trees or a cluster of slender palm-trunks, sometimes on the roadside grave of some departed inhabitant of Motuvera, with its little high-ridged roof raised over it on short pillars. All these things stood out momentarily in the flashes of yellow light. Then Tuanui would collect himself and urge his thundering vehicle straight down the road as though attempting to create a local speed record. As they rushed on he sang loudly and unintelligibly, perhaps expressing his general satisfaction with himself and his charge. They proceeded, however, without accident until they came to the bay, where the road turned sharply inland, round the head of the inlet, towards Christopher Baillie's house.

A shout from the invisible chief was Baillie's first warning that something was wrong. His next was a feeling that the surface under the lorry's wheels was more than usually uneven. Then he realised that they were no longer on the road, but heading straight on towards the beach and the dully gleaming sea.

"Look out, Tuanui!" he shouted, catching him by the arm. "You're going into the sea!"

"Ohé!" sang Tuanui, pressing hard on the accelerator.

"What are roads to me and my Dragon? My Dragon can fly, he can swim—he can go anywhere. You will soon be home, Beli!"

The shore at that point was fairly smooth, with a hard surface of sand. It did not greatly hinder the flying progress of the lorry, which passed rapidly from the grass to the beach and from the beach into the sea, its impetus carrying it far into the tranquil waters. There was a mighty splash, a cloud of steam from the swamped engine, and a great silence, save for the ripples. Baillie found the Pacific Ocean pouring in upon him. He struggled to his feet, conscious of an agonising twinge from his injured ankle. The door would not open, but he hauled himself over it, grasping the top of the cab, and managed, spluttering and choking, to climb out of the water on to the roof of the lorry, beside the dishevelled and hysterical chief, who was fondly clasping the sodden wreck of his straw hat. Of Tuanui there was no sign.

As a contrast to the turbulent scene through which Baillie had just passed, the night was absolutely calm. No breeze stirred the palms on the shore. The water brooded darkly around the lorry, except where sparks of phosphorescence winked in the little wavelets that lapped its top. Overhead the stars glowed imperturbably, and Baillie found himself vaguely thinking that the crookedness of the Southern Cross must be due to someone's having driven a lorry into it. He pulled himself together and measured with his eye the distance to the shore.

"How deep is the water here?" he asked Manaia.

But his companion was reciting the Lord's Prayer in a hurried undertone, mingled, so far as Baillie could gather, with recollections of past misdeeds and scraps of the multiplication table. Glancing downwards he answered his own question as he saw how close the water was to the top of the lorry: it must be at least six feet deep. He was not a good swimmer at the best of times, and with his damaged foot he did not for the moment feel inclined to try swimming ashore. He gave a shout, hoping that someone on land would hear him. After a time Manaia, who seemed to have collected his scattered wits, joined in with a lugubrious howl.

Three or four minutes passed. They continued to let off concerted yells at intervals, and finally they heard an answering hail. They waited. There was a subdued splashing from the direction of the shore. The sound came nearer, and at last something bumped gently against the lorry's side. It was a canoe, containing a sobered and abashed Tuanui, and in it the two castaways were conveyed back to dry land.

Baillie turned to look at the dark oblong object which broke

the surface of the bay. He thought of Davis Anderson and his Company.

"Gone into liquidation," he murmured.

He tried to feel pity for Anderson, but his heart was light. He knew now that he had loathed the lorry: its noise, its smell, its appearance and everything about it. It had marred the peaceful beauty of Motuvera; and now Motuvera had drowned it. He sang softly to himself as he limped along the road towards his house, leaning on Tuanui's shoulder.

So the 'coach' of the Motuvera Transport Company entered its last sphere of usefulness. Anderson made no attempt to recover his property, declaring that it was a good riddance, and that this was the last effort he would make to rouse Motuvera from its native lethargy. To-day the long inlet at the west end of the island is the most popular bathing-place in the lagoon. And there the youths and maidens resort in the cool of the evenings and think with gratitude (when they think of it at all) of the Motuvera Transport Company. For theirs is the only bathing-place in Motuvera to possess a diving-raft.

POLO IN GILGIT.

BY W. R. F. TREVELYAN.

I.

Polo was played in Persia about the time of Alexander's invasion and was even introduced into India at an early period. But it is a strange fact that it completely disappeared for some centuries except in the little Hindu Kush States around Gilgit and Chitral and in Manipur—two parts of the world where the natural difficulties of terrain would appear to be greatest. The original game survives in both places, and Hurlingham and Meadowbrook owe their existence to the spirit with which these mountaineers have maintained it.

In the Gilgit Agency polo is undoubtedly the national game and is played by every one who owns a pony. The smallest children play a dismounted form—a sort of hockey without rules—all day and every day. Every little village has its polo ground, ranging from 150 to 250 yards long and 25 to 50 yards in width. Near the top of the Kilik Pass in Hunza is surely the highest ground in the world, roughly 13,500 feet above sea-level. It is not often used, which is fortunate for the local ponies, but the Mir of Hunza's shepherds do play there when two sides can be raised.

Our ponies are Badakshis from Northern Afghanistan and are ideal for the game we play.

Small and handy, they have plenty of bone and remarkable stamina, and, if they have not the pace of the bigger ponies playing elsewhere, the game is, nevertheless, as fast as one could hope for on these miniature grounds. The majority of ponies are stallions and a stand-up fight frequently adds to the excitement of a chukker. Until recently a good pony could be bought for two hundred rupees (fifteen pounds), but the requirements of the Afghan cavalry have caused a shortage which has affected the local market, and to-day one pays double this amount.

Sticks are made locally with heads of wild almond or mulberry. They are short in the handle and heavy in the head, and are used from the wrist, the ball being hit farther away from the pony than in our game. British officers prefer their own sticks, but the natives will not look at these, although they like our bamboo shafts. Bamboo-root balls are much preferred when they can be obtained, but any rough substitute is used, from a well-shaped piece of willow in the village game to a round stone by the youthful enthusiast.

In Gilgit we play half-hour chukkers, most of the locals playing the same pony in a second chukker after one chukker's rest. The real game, however, is to nine goals, and this is played in the Jalsah tournaments. The lack of width in the ground is made up for by stone walls on each side, and off these there is much play. One can have any number a side, but six is the rule at Jalsah and five or six a side is usual in Gilgit. The standard of play, of course, varies, and is highest in the small States of Nagar and Punial. A game between these teams is a truly marvellous spectacle, hard and reckless riding and wonderful stick work (of their own fashion) being the rule throughout, and the frenzy of excitement of the spectators, who are backed by numerous pipe and drum bands, cannot but impress the most blasé.

The game itself is our own polo, but eliminating all the rules making for safe play and adding several features of its own. Crossing is not forbidden, but accidents on this account are rare owing to the wariness of the ponies. You can hook an opponent's stick in literally any fashion and from any position you please, and you can take the ball in front of or between his pony's feet. There is, naturally in such a game, a good deal of scrumming and mêlée on the wall, the worst feature of the game. But though hard play is the rule, rough and dirty play is rare and is immediately dropped on.

Of the features peculiar to the local game, perhaps the most interesting is the 'Tambak.' When a goal is scored, a player, generally he who hit the goal, takes the ball in his hand and gallops with it to the centre of the field, where he throws it forward and, whilst

it is still in the air, hits it with all his might towards the opposing team's goal (ends being changed after each goal as in our polo). A good player, the Raja of Punial, for example, will frequently score a goal from his 'Tambak.' To see it well done is a very pretty sight, the ball soaring high up in the air and falling over or between the goal-posts.

Another distinctly peculiar rule is that which permits the ball to be caught in the hand; any player can catch it and ride with it or throw it through his opponents' goal. The opposing side can prevent him from doing so in any way, such as by seizing his bridle or his person, and his own side can assist him by baulking their opponents. Tremendous and gory wrestling matches are frequent and that the spirit of the game suffers in no way from this says much for the local players. When caught, the ball can be passed or thrown to one's own side, and the best teams make use of this to show remarkable organisation and team work, each trying to ride his man and the ball being passed from hand to hand until it reaches, perhaps, an unmarked member of their own side. Usually the ball is caught on rebound from a wall and there is much play against the wall with this object in view. If the player is unhorsed with the ball in his hand, he must drop it and let play proceed in the ordinary manner.

In the original game the ball had to be touched down by the scorer after he had hit a goal, much as in Rugby football. This led to many accidents, as the methods of preventing it by the other side were various and often dangerous. This game is not now played at Gilgit or when British officers are present, but in Nagar they play it regularly when by themselves.

It is still the local custom for the defeated team to dance before their victors, though fortunately not enforced when British officers are amongst the vanquished. This is done with great goodwill, only a few of the more highly-born considering it beneath their dignity. Drums beat early in the morning on polo days to warn the players, and drums and pipes play throughout every game, rising to a crescendo when their own side scores or their own man hits a 'Tambak.' In Gilgit we play every Sunday and Thursday, British officers, local Rajas and Scouts officers having two chukkers to themselves and two or more being provided for the rest, amongst whom are possibly one's own cook and other servants. Play is slow and confined when compared to the civilised game, but, considering the difficulties that have to be contended with, I do not see how it could be improved. It is a robust and manly game and has done much to maintain the hardy character of the local inhabitants.

II.

Jalsah, which happens every March, consists of a Durbar held by the Political Agent on behalf of the Imperial Government and the Maharajah of Kashmir, a polo tournament, inspection of the Gilgit Corps of Scouts and various sports and games.

The Durbar differs little from other Durbars. Of chief interest to the English observer are the Mirs and local Governors and Rajas, resplendent in silks and brocades from Central Asia, sitting in a large semicircle in front of the dais occupied by the Political Agent and the British and Kashmir officers. Behind each Mir or Governor are a dozen or so of his more important relatives, Wazirs and the like. All, having paid their homage, receive presents—saddlery, binoculars and firearms being the most popular. The Mir of Hunza, the outstanding figure of the Agency and a wise and kindly despot, sits nearest the Political Agent. Next to him is the Mir of Nagar, a handsome and refined man in advanced middle age, with his equally handsome and debonair sons behind him. Then come the Governors of Punial, Yasin, Kuh-Ghizar and Ishkoman, each seated with his entourage, and beyond again the lesser chiefs.

But the Polo Tournament is everyone's first interest. The Political Agent, the British officers and their wives, the Kashmir officials, and all the local notabilities watch from a dais, completely enclosed by wire netting and closely resembling an aviary—a very necessary protection when the local game is being played 'all out.' The entire population of Gilgit and neighbourhood, and every man or boy from the outside districts who can find his way in, sit massed on the walls, the surrounding trees, and every point of vantage within sight. Numerous bands, who have accompanied teams, play wildly from the beginning to the end, leaving one's head in a whirl and nerves grating for weeks afterwards.

To-day the entertainment opens, not with polo, but with mounted sports such as popinjay and archery. The latter—called 'Tir Andazi'—is of great interest as being another survival from an ancient Persian sport which has died out in its own country. It consists simply in riding full gallop down the ground and shooting an arrow at an egg or similar mark placed on a small pile of earth. After half an hour or so of such spectacles polo commences. I have spoken of the good spirit in which the game is played, but this does not always apply to the spectators, amongst whom, every now and again, a head is broken. This worries nobody except the sufferer, and the police, sup-

plied by the Kashmir regiment and the Corps of Scouts, soon settle the disagreement by somewhat forcible methods, whilst the removal of the casualties on stretchers causes the greatest amusement to the onlookers on the wall. This year, however, Hunza and Nagar meet each other, and local feeling is too strong for even the traditions of the national sport. They have been rivals, not too friendly, for centuries, and what Hunza gained on the battlefield Nagar can generally avenge on the polo-ground. One of each team have been enemies for years; Sarwar, a swaggering Nagri with the dash and conceit of a rough-riding sergeant, and Imamyar Beg of Hunza, less dashing in appearance but no less tough in a scrap. To-day Sarwar, in an unfortunate lapse, follows through with a back-hander full into Imamyar's face. The latter, spluttering teeth and threats, is hauled before the Political Agent together with his antagonist, and the game is stopped. Sarwar is held to blame and leaves the field, possibly fortunately, as Imamyar states he would have killed him had he remained, not necessarily an empty threat. Nagar, though short of a man, go on to win the game and later the tournament. They have been the outstanding rivals of Punial—the winners for the last three years—and they defeat this team handsomely in the final. Their victory is rumoured, however, to be not unconnected with the present to Nagar of Punial's best pony, a gift made necessary in order to settle a dispute about a lady.

SOME BOOK-HUNTING ADVENTURES.

BY R. S. GARNETT.

XI.

A History for Collectors of 'First Editions.'

At the club this afternoon a tale was told me by a man just back from a visit to Valparaiso —a tale of two book-collectors there. It appears that each having expressed himself about a certain volume in terms deemed by the other to be insulting, a duel between them, through the good offices of their respective seconds, has been arranged, and is, by their numerous friends, hopefully expected shortly to take place.

What! A duel about a book! will doubtless exclaim some of my readers; but you, my friend, have already guessed that the dispute centres on the thorny question of a genuine 'first issue.' In point of fact one of the would-be duellists (so I was informed) possesses a copy of the book in question in yellow paper wrappers, while the other cherishes one identical to it in all respects except as to its covers, which are green.

And yet, did the two enemies only know it, very possibly neither the yellow book nor the green is of the veritable 'first issue.'

How can that be? Know, then, that the mysteries attendant on the birth of a book are not only 'extensive and peculiar,' but often such as to be incapable of a really final solution. Two babes may be, and I believe occasionally are, 'mixed' by their respective nurses, and, indeed, an individual with a beard of some five days' growth who proffered me a penny box of matches for twopence in Gray's Inn the other day gave me to understand, in extenuation of the price, that I was buying from a pseudo-millionaire, he, for a too brief space, having been the recognised and lawful heir to a plutocrat. "But there, sir," he said, "there was another red-'aired baby boy in my father's mansion, a gardener's son; the nurses got a-talkin', and when the bell rang for their supper in the 'all, they mixed us. I will say this," he continued, "the millionaire 'as 'e becum when 'is, I should say my, father died, was always most good to me, 'e was, and once 'e ses to me, 'Look 'ere, Halbert, I've 'ad enuff of this, you 'ave a try at it.' 'No fear,' I ses to 'im, 'no fear,' I ses, 'where's my eddication?' I ses. And that settled it. Thank you kindly, sir."

But babies do not have 'trial issues,' as do books. A

single copy of such an issue getting into commerce may easily cause the death of a collector, or even a bibliographer or two, through worry or disappointment.

The history that I am about to narrate will, I trust, prove to hot-blooded book collectors, whether of South America or elsewhere, the futility of disseminating their gore about a 'first issue.'

They may unknowingly, in fact, easily fight about a second issue, for which neither of them would give one *fico*.

One day, then, many years ago, a friend—a young girl—did me the honour of asking me to find her a publisher for her poems. As you may suppose, I, who had then recently celebrated my nineteenth birthday, was thrilled, but in all the circumstances I was perhaps almost entitled to be the object—among her many literary friends—of her choice in the matter. And for this reason—the poet and I one afternoon had met in Gordon Street, Bloomsbury, near the gate which in those days stretched itself across the carriage road, thus protecting the proud residents from the incursions of miscellaneous vehicles which had no lawful occasions there.

I saw her—the poet—moving towards me, and, as she did so, folding an evening newspaper which, under the conduct of an Irishman, had then recently burst on an astonished, I may almost say a delighted, public. Before its advent youthful literary geniuses had about as much chance of getting their 'copy' printed in the daily press, whether morning or evening, as of flying to the moon; after its appearance it was not a very rare thing to hear a youth or maiden remark, "T. P. took my article (or poem) at once, and a week later I got a post-office order." Knowing this delightful condition of affairs in a corner of the world of daily journalism, I was therefore not greatly astonished when the poet greeted me with—

"Oh, my poem. Do read it."

I marvelled at her, for the rather listless-looking, rather sallow face so well known to me was now flushed, aglow; and the brown eyes were alight, the while with a charming smile she handed me the paper and pointed out her poem.

Eleanor, I perceived for the first time, was beautiful.

There standing by her I read her poem. It was then my turn to flush, for the freshness and sweetness of the verses overwhelmed me.

I gasped out something and stood gazing at their young author. And then happened the marvel which for the rest of her life endeared me to her. I became suddenly conscious of a tiny lady in whom I recognised a too seldom seen family friend. She said to me, "May I interrupt you? I have a message for your mother, if you will give it," and she

added a few words about coming to tea on a certain day in that week. After promising to give the message, I said, "Miss Rossetti, you have reached this spot at an auspicious moment. My friend here has just published her first poem. To my mind it is so lovely as to be worthy of your attention. Will you read it?"

"Is it in that paper?" she asked me.

"Yes, it is."

"Then read it to me, please."

Rather badly than well, for my voice faltered, I began to read Eleanor's poem to the author of 'Goblin Market.'

As I reached the end of each stanza, she inclined her head gently.

Then, when I had done—addressing Eleanor, "You have written a most beautiful poem, a most truly beautiful poem," she said; and smiling, added, "Dear sister poet, as I must call you, I should like to congratulate you and, if I may, to kiss you."

There are some scenes which defy description, and I shall not attempt to describe the embrace in which the delighted Eleanor was then enfolded. In fact, involuntarily, I, as one who witnesses something too ineffable for masculine eyes to behold, had half turned aside.

The two ladies, forgetting me, moved on together towards Gordon Square.

Somewhat later Eleanor and I met. She related with a happy face that, encouraged by Miss Christina Rossetti, she had written several more poems. Were they accepted by editors? I cannot remember, nor can I recall what space of time passed before I was asked by her to find her a publisher.

In those, now somewhat remote, days publishers were comparatively few, and publishers of books of poems were very few. I had understood from Eleanor that her ideas and wishes did not aspire to any of the more exalted celebrated firms. I think that she did not seem to see her name in lists which enrolled distinguished songsters. She seemed, from what she said, to fancy that I would know someone who was desirous of holding out a hand to a beginner. About her talent she had no doubt whatever. She knew herself to be a poet, but she knew also that a thousand things might occur which would prevent her from being a successful or an acclaimed one. She handed me her neatly written little manuscript, and I promised to try to do as she wished. One injunction she laid on me—I was not on any account to trouble my father nor, indeed, to make use of any family interest on her behalf.

Now, it so happened that at that time I did not know a publisher to speak to, but I did know a young man named Benjamin Sprouts who was employed in the office of a tolerably well-known publisher, whose catalogue included some

books of verse. Benjamin and I had become acquainted, and used to meet at a certain baker's shop near the British Museum. There, after midday, a few brothers of the pen drank coffee and ate rolls and butter, with the addition of, perhaps, a hard-boiled egg. A day or so later as he and I sat side by side on stools with our knees against the counter, I produced Eleanor's manuscript and asked him what chance there might be of its publication.

"Are the poems at all improper or blasphemous? Because if they are I know a man who would take them at once." No—they were neither blasphemous nor improper, I told him, and I added that they were by a young lady of great beauty and virtue.

He expressed his disappointment. "We get poems almost by the barrow load," he went on as he cracked his egg-shell, "and if return postage isn't sent, we sell them, after a bit, for waste-paper. Not that this is worth anything in that way," he added, as he weighed Eleanor's dainty manuscript in his huge red fist.

We had a long talk, and at last, as he did not appear to be in the least persuaded by my eloquence on the merits of the poems, I related to him the meeting of the two poets in Gordon Street.

He whistled shrilly.

Then he said, "Hand the stuff over. I'll talk to the old man about it."

I was rather offended, but I did hand it over.

Weeks passed. Whenever my friend and I met he had no news for me, nor could he even inform me that any 'reader' or other person had perused a line of the poems. Fortunately, perhaps, the poet had gone on a visit to Italy.

Then one day, much later, I got a note.

Eleanor's poems were accepted! I was informed that they were to make an early appearance in a projected series of slender volumes of very select poetry, and that a 10 per cent royalty on sales would be paid.

I telegraphed the news to Eleanor, and she replied, also by telegraph, asking me to correct her proofs.

But no proofs came. For reasons which I never clearly understood, the launching of the series was delayed until another publishing season.

Eleanor returned, and I remember that she sought out the publisher and was reassured by him. A note from her, which I came across the other day, told me that a formal agreement was signed between them.

Much later, it must have been, I found myself engaged in earnest conversation with a lad known as 'Spots,' a junior clerk of the publisher. The fact was that my acquaintance, Benjamin Sprouts, when riding on what was known as a 'penny-farthing' bicycle on the Great North Road near Hat-

field, had taken it into his head to steer its course at full speed over an old hat which lay before him in that famous highway. Now inside that hat was a large stone. Poor Benjamin was picked up suffering from severe concussion of the brain, while various parts of his body were injured. I went to see him in the hospital on various occasions, and during his long convalescence he recommended me to see his ally, 'Spots,' and tell him to do all he could for the book of poems, which, if I remember aright, was to be volume three of the series.

'Spots,' behind whose chair were suspended two cricket bats, said, when I sounded him, "As the author is a friend of yours we will do something very special for her."

Then one day some time later I received an agonised note from Eleanor. She had heard that the projected series was abandoned for the reason (so she gathered) that a rival publisher was about to launch a somewhat similar one, but she was told that if she chose to insist on the fulfilment of her agreement, it would be carried out. She asked for my advice. I went to see her, and, in the result, she replied to the letter requiring the publication of her poems forthwith.

Then I sought out 'Spots.' He told me, in confidence, that there had been a deal between the respective publishers, the result of which was that each had promised to keep off the other's grass. Eleanor's publisher was to abandon his series, and the other man was to refrain from the issue of some non-copyright novels in a cheap and uniform edition. 'Spots' added that had not the old man "got his shirt out" on the occasion he would have been "done in by a dirty dog." "But when are my friend's poems to come out?" I asked him. "Well," he replied (always in confidence), "the paper people, the binders and the printers want a bit of their own back before they do any more for the old man, so he's nosing about for more capital. Oh, it's all right," he added consolingly, "he's sure to get it, for too many would lose by him if he went under. It's only a question of time." I felt hideously uncomfortable.

At a later date Benjamin emerged — a shadow of his former self—from the hospital. To my amazement and chagrin, he told me that he was going to Abyssinia. It appeared that in the next bed to his own in the hospital ward had lain an explorer. That gentleman, who was as full of wounds and sores as was Don Quixote after his attack on the windmill, had filled the remnants of Benjamin's brain with the notion that Abyssinia was an earthly paradise—in fact, the only place worth living in—and that, apart from this fact, it contained much red gold, and even, were such not located, formed a marvellous field for enterprises of every sort and description. I fancied from all this that

Benjamin Sprouts had scant faith in his employer's ability to nose out or, at all events, get in more capital, but perhaps I was wrong—perhaps he was really tired of city life and city enterprises. However this may be, in a few short weeks he sailed with the explorer from Liverpool, leaving me to do what I could for Eleanor with 'Spots.' (Neither the explorer nor poor Benjamin was ever heard of again.)

It is strange to me now to reflect that never did it occur to me to see "the old man" himself.

One evening I read that a classic race—the 'Grand National'—had that day been won by an animal named 'Congress.' The owner, Captain Machell, was felicitated, and a representation of him (a very bad woodcut) was annexed. The Captain interested me for the reason that a military uncle of mine had some long time previously bet him that he would not succeed in jumping across a full-sized billiard table. The Captain had succeeded in accomplishing the dangerous feat and my uncle's bank balance was considerably depleted in the event. 'Spots' shortly afterwards came to see me. He proudly said, "The old man has won a pot on 'Congress,' and your friend's poems are to come out at once." He added mysteriously, "I'll see to them. Leave it to me. I've got something up my sleeve."

I told Eleanor of this remarkable conversation with 'Spots.'

A few months passed, and then an invitation came from her mother to a dance. I was not a little surprised, for Eleanor and dancing had not the slightest connection in my mind. Usually, when I had been to see her in her father's huge house, I had noticed, on ascending the wide staircase to her own rooms on the second floor, that the vast drawing-rooms were shuttered up and the chandeliers and furniture shrouded in brown holland. I somehow understood that Eleanor's mother preferred living at Monte Carlo or Trouville and that her father was content with the ground floor (often super-scented with the aroma of the finest Havana cigars). However, there the invitation was. I accepted it.

The house was on the south side of Regent's Park. There, across the wide pavement, hung an awning, laid down on the steps was a gorgeous carpet, everywhere in the square-paved hall were red and white flowers, dazzling lights; and the strains of a band proceeded from the several widely open, spacious drawing-room windows. The month was June; a nightingale was singing in the park across the road.[1]

Realising guiltily that I was

[1] Even at the date of which I write, a chorus was not to be heard in Regent's Park.

late, I ascended the staircase to the drawing-rooms. There, some fifty couples were waltzing in a kind of faëry-land. Was it possible that these were the shrouded, dark, silent rooms I had so often glimpsed? I fell into a reverie.

Then I felt a touch on my arm. A lovely radiant girl in marvellous white satin, with ropes of shining pearls, stood before me—Eleanor!

"Ah," said she, "at last, O faithless one!"

And to her partner, out of whose arms she must have slipped when she noticed me, she said, "You will forgive me." He bowed and walked away.

Drawing me aside, Eleanor then told me that of all her guests I for her was the chief, for that day had her poems been published (the dance, I gathered, was given to celebrate the occasion). "But can you tell me," she added, "why my 'author's' copies are of the *second edition?*"

"Let me see them?" I gasped.

We made our way upstairs to her sitting-room, and there, on the table I knew so well, lay an opened parcel of brown paper, with a dozen copies of the 'Poems.' Yes, it was so—'Second Edition' was on the title-page of each copy.

A horrid suspicion had at once rushed into my mind as I recalled the promise of 'Spots' "to do something special," "with something up his sleeve," but I made the best I could of the matter, saying something about all the copies of the first small edition probably having been needed for review and presentation purposes.

Eleanor and I lingered there over the book. I will say, to the credit of "the old man," that it was well printed on good paper, and that the binding of white boards with the gilt-lettered back of white vellum looked charming.

Eleanor was delighted, with the grave delight of a youthful Madonna.

She said, as she wrote my name in a copy, "You have been so good." Had I been a wise, a careful friend? I felt more than doubtful.

When we went downstairs I did not mingle with her guests; instead, I walked home.

It was a wondrously beautiful moonlit night; a nightingale still sang as I turned into the Inner Circle of the park.

I could not sleep.

The next morning I sought out 'Spots.' On seeing my face as I entered, he said, "There's been a rare to-do about those poems! I wouldn't have missed it for nuts. The old man has booted Boggs (in the warehouse, you know) over it. You see, old Boggs mixed up the parcels from the binders and sent off copies of the Second Edition to the press, the shops and the author, never noticing nothing, the poor old beggar."

"But why *is* there a Second Edition?"

"Well, you see, to please you, I promised to do something special, so I got the printers to——"

"But *why?*"

"Well, I thought to make a bit of a boom, and get the old man to advertise 'Second Edition' in a few weeks' time. There are four hundred copies Second Edition, and one hundred make the First."

"So the Second Edition is the First," I said, as soon as I could speak.

"Yes, it is."

"Won't the mistake ruin the book?"

"Not a bit of it. I'll have a few pars. got out as an advert. making a bit of a tale about it."

"Don't do anything of the sort."

"No?"

"You would make it worse."

I was 'finished' with the fellow.

What actually happened in the sequel was merely that there was much hilarity in 'the trade,' while three or four reviewers commented on the fact that Miss Eleanor ——'s 'Poems' had reached them in the Second Edition, from which fact they opined that the sale of the first had exceeded the publisher's expectations.

Generous-minded Eleanor forbore to ask me any more questions.

Mr Boggs ultimately obtained a new situation.

'Spots,' a little later, was killed by a cricket ball which struck him on the ear in Regent's Park. (The 'pitches' were close together, and poor 'Spots' was the victim of a ball hit by a batsman in another match—so I was told.)

The old man soon followed him. Orations were delivered over his grave—in one his 'services to literature' were dwelt on at enormous length, in torrents of eloquence, by Mr George Augustus Sala.

Two years later Eleanor's great success as a novelist astonished the world of letters, and gratified her; but, for my part, I believe that the happiest moment of her tragically short life was that in which she was embraced by sweet gentle Christina Rossetti in Gordon Street, Bloomsbury. How characteristic of the warmth of the Italian heart was the spontaneous embrace of her sister poet.

The moral of my history is that book-collectors need, like Agag, to walk circumspectly, refraining from the exchange of slugs. If, at this moment, a millionaire collector is signing a cheque in payment for a copy of Eleanor's 'Poems' in the so-called 'First Edition,' at least, by relating the truth about it, I have done my best. I hope that he will so feel.

THE END.

Fortunate, indeed, is the librarian who, at some time or other, has not suffered the pain of

seeing a permanent gap on his shelves, caused by a delinquent reader. In most such cases, no doubt, the delinquent's motive has been that of gain, but that gain is not always the object or temptation is proved by the following history. The letter received from the culprit by my father, then of the British Museum, was handed to him when I was present, and the circumstances of the case were gleaned from the lad to whom it was dictated. The history belongs to a great many years ago.

So it was the end that had come at last. For months past he had foreseen, but had neither been able to prevent it, nor to arrange anything to soften the blow to the one man on earth for whom he cared, of the inevitable discovery that must so swiftly follow. Indeed, something even much more dreadful than anticipation had preoccupied him—he had been afraid that the discovery would be made while he himself yet lived. Once recently he had fallen in crossing Great Russell Street and, to his alarm, a fellow-reader, after helping him to his feet, had offered to take him home. "Do you know where I live?" he had asked as soon as he could speak, to get the reply, "Of course I do, I have seen you go in and out of your house in Keppel Street many a time: why, I lodge nearly opposite." And then he had wondered how many 'readers' there might be who had the same knowledge.

The idea suggested many dangers, for someone among them might call, go upstairs and find him with the books! He was aghast. Then he reflected that during twenty years no one had ever called on him save, indeed, his brother from Swansea when on a short visit to London. And yet a policeman might be the man to set him on his feet and take him home, when, on hearing from the landlady of his days spent in the reading-room, and remembering the hue and cry that had been raised over the missing books, might insist on searching his room. To avert any idea that he had any valuables he had never had a lock put on his book-box. There, under his bed, it always stood—an old waistcoat or two placed over the top layer of the books inside—their only protection from discovery.

Twice had he returned from the Museum to find the box in the centre of the floor, but that was only because the girl had turned his room out and had forgotten to push the heavy box back again. He was sure that no one in the house suspected the honesty of him—a lodger of twenty years' standing—but there might be a thief among so many people who continually came and went. On the whole, he had judged it best to leave the box without a lock, trusting to the thief's not troubling to open old books

and observe the Museum stamp within each.

But what a damned fool he had been ever to begin 'borrowing' the books. The idea of doing so had occurred to him one Sunday when he had nothing to read and was itching for Monday morning to arrive, when he could go on with that fascinating episode in Saint Simon's 'Mémoires.' What a shame it was that he could not take a book home on Saturday evening, to return it on Monday morning. And then months later as he was leaving at closing time on a Saturday, almost without thinking he had put a book in his pocket and walked out with it. How his hands trembled as, on reaching his bedroom, he had opened it, and how disappointed he was to find that he could not enjoy himself with it. Something kept saying, "Don't read it. You took it without thinking. Now, if you don't read, you can feel that it has not profited you, and you can avoid temptation for evermore." Alas! only a few weeks later he had succumbed, and had read comfortably through a volume of De Retz between the Saturday and the Monday.

After that delight he almost always managed on a Saturday to take a book from the reading-room shelves, secrete it under his coat, and put it back unnoticed on the Monday. Then he had told himself that he was a fool not always to have a book to read in bed every night. . . . But that was not the worst of it. He began to find himself wanting to carry home certain books which could only be obtained by writing applications for them (application tickets, as they were called), which were restored by the attendants only in return for the books. For a long time had he tried to put this dangerous idea of 'borrowing' 'ticket-books' firmly aside. Then one day, by pure accident, he found that a French gentleman was getting out quantities of volumes of French 'Mémoires' and piling them on his desk—an end seat next the shelves. How easy it would be when walking past that desk to take up a volume, for the Frenchman was often for lengthy periods at the catalogue desks or at lunch. Of course, there would be a fuss at the end of the day when the ticket remained unclaimed, but ultimately the book would be found somewhere on the shelves, and it would be thought that it had been inadvertently placed there. Such things did happen occasionally. So one day, without pausing as he passed the desk, he took up a book and put it in his pocket. It proved to be a volume of Brantôme. How he enjoyed it that night in bed! The next morning he put it between two volumes of Alison's 'History of Europe.' After that he felt it impossible to resist the temptation of taking books home, and soon, to avoid the risk—an ever-growing one—of being seen

putting them on the shelves, he began to keep them.

For a long time he heard nothing about their being missed. Then one day a worried attendant had said to him, "Have you any suspicion of who's the thief?" and had gone on to add that, the superintendent having reported the loss of some rare volumes to the trustees, something in the way of extra precaution had to be done. His heart beat wildly. Then he asked, "What kind of books are missing?" "Oh, some rare French books—like what you read, so you have an interest in tracing the thief." "Why?" "Well, you can't have the books if they are not in the library, can you?"

Then the man he loved—the superintendent—had spoken to him. He had said, "I am most gravely concerned about the disappearance of the books on this list—please to look at it. I am told that you have not been known to have had any of them out, but as they are in several instances just the kind of books you habitually read, I have thought it my duty for the common good to inquire whether by any possibility you can give us any assistance. The readers who have had the missing books are, like yourself, beyond all suspicion, and can only say that they have been undoubtedly taken from their desks, never more than one volume on any one occasion, and that only at intervals. Can you help us in any way?"

He had paled, and a dreadful pain had shot through him, but had replied, "I am as puzzled as you yourself, sir. I only heard quite recently that something was wrong; but I will keep my ears and eyes open, you may be sure."

Further enjoyment in reading that day he found to be out of the question. His first thought was—how abominably I have behaved; the superintendent has taken the loss very badly, and is suffering, not knowing whether any one of the particular readers he has helped is the thief. Then he had thought—but I am not a thief, only a 'borrower'; and a wild idea had occurred to him of bringing back all the books and owning up to the superintendent. No, no; he could not do that. It would mean expulsion from the reading-room for the rest of his life. Rather death! Then as he sat at his desk pretending to read, a truly awful idea struck him. It was—what course was he to pursue? *Were no more books to be taken, he might be suspected: he had been spoken to. On the other hand, his every movement might be closely watched.*

After much strained thinking he decided to take no more books, but he felt it by far too dangerous to return those he had taken. They must remain in his box under his bed. Why had he not foreseen the inevitable result of his course of action?

All these thoughts ran through his brain as he lay

on the floor where he had fallen on trying to dress. He could see the box. How he hated it! If he had never had a box, he felt sure he would never have become a 'borrower.' And, strangely enough, 'borrowing' was in his family. Had not scores of prayer and hymn books been found in his aunt's wardrobe after her death? She must have been long in the habit of 'borrowing' them from the chapel at which she was a most regular worshipper. How worried he had been when asked by the family to decide whether to return the books to the members of the congregation whose names were in them.

He must try to think clearly, even though he was too weak to move even an inch nearer the bed to pull down the coverlet over him. How cold he was! An icy draught blew from under the ill-fitting door. The lodgers were evidently all at breakfast; presently they would be leaving the house for their day's work. Should one of them pass his door, he would call out. There was one lad he rather liked. He might ask him to fetch the doctor; not that he had any hope of living. In fact he did not wish to live, but *wanted to know when he would die.* With that knowledge in his possession he could devise the best way of softening the blow—if, indeed, it could be softened. It seemed now extraordinary that although ever connected with his 'borrowings' was the thought of the superintendent, he had never brought himself to grapple with the consequences to that gentleman. In fact, he had thrust the thought of the superintendent as far from himself as possible. But now he hated to think of the blow the news of the inevitable discovery would inflict—it was by far more important than his own wretched life, and he did not believe in the possibility of a future one. Someone was coming up to his landing—he would call. "Is that you, Frank?" he called, and Frank—the lad he rather liked—came in. "Hullo! Mr Muffins—what's wrong? Can't you move?" he said. "No; I fell and can't move." "That's bad—I'll get help—half a mo'." He felt annoyed that Frank at such a time should call him "Mr Muffins," the nickname he went by on account of his Sunday muffin with his tea. Frank had disappeared. Soon he returned with two of the other lodgers. They gently lifted him, the helpless man, on to his bed and covered him up. Then he swooned.

When the doctor came and examined him with a stethoscope, he managed to say, "Is this the end? I must know." And the reply came, "Take this brandy and you'll feel better. But if you have any wishes you should not delay to express them." "Thank you—I understand." He drank, and life seemed to be renewed in him. He said,

"Frank, get ink and paper and write for me. Put what I dictate down, and then put the letter under my pillow. When I am dead, deliver it."

Then, when alone with Frank, he with difficulty spoke as follows:—

"To The Superintendent.
Reading room, British Museum.

"Sir,—I am dictating this letter on my death-bed. When you get it, please send round to the above address for the books that are in the box under my bed. The Museum will then have lost nothing through me, and I earnestly beseech you to try to forgive me for taking the books. It was a wicked thing for me to have done, and I deserve heavy punishment. Never when I began did I think of depriving the Museum of any of its treasures. Can you believe, sir, that although I have acted so wickedly, yet I feel the dear Museum and you, sir, are the only things on earth I have cared for. A man may sin against the hand that fed him and yet be grateful to it. Now these are my last words—do not imagine that any other reader could behave as I have done, for no reader should suffer because of my wickedness.

"I am, sir, yours respectfully."

"Read that over, Frank. Yes, you have got it right. Sign my name for me."

Death did not come for several days. During them the old man told Frank what I have here recorded.

THE TWO LETTERS.

"You are wanted on the telephone, sir."

"Who is it, Keziah?"

"Mr Binns."

"Oh, yes. Well, take his message for me. I never hear him distinctly."

"Yes, sir."

Keziah, retreating, closed my door, and I resumed my pen. Presently she returned.

"Well?"

"Mr Binns wished me to say that he has given your name to a lady who has a letter from Shelley for sale. He thinks she will call with it to-night."

"Oh, very well. Thank you. Mr Binns never forgets my interest in Shelley."

"Sir?"

"Keziah, I am very busy, but I will see the lady when she comes."

"Very good, sir."

About an hour later my door opened once more, and I beheld a tall well-attired lady with a most affable expression. She said, "Mr Garnett?"

"Yes, my name is Garnett."

"I am so glad to meet you. I knew your father at the British Museum."

"Oh, that is very nice. Do sit there, please, by the fire. Were you a 'reader'?"

"No, not a 'reader,' but my father was a scholar, and occasionally, when quite a young

girl, I took his notes to Dr Garnett."

"And you know my friend, Mr Binns?"

"Yes, I met him this evening by chance, and, talking of Shelley and his letter, he gave me your name."

"You have the letter?"

"Yes, here in my bag."

"I shall be glad to see it."

"Here it is, a most interesting letter."

I took it from her and carried it to the other end of the room to look at it under the electric light on my writing-table. After a moment, I said, "Yes, I recognise the handwriting. I will read it through."

What I read was as follows:—

SIR,—In various numbers of your Journal I have seen mentioned a work entitled "The Vampire"[1] with the addition of my name as that of the Author. I am not the author, and never heard of the work in question until now. In a more recent paper I perceive a formal annunciation of "The Vampire" with the addition of an account of my residence "in the Island of Mitylene," an Island which I have occasionally sailed by in the course of travelling some years ago through the Levant—and where I should have no objection to reside—but where I have never yet resided. Neither of these performances are mine, and I presume that it is neither unjust nor ungracious to request that you will favour me by contradicting the advertisement to which I allude. If the book is clever it would be base to deprive the real writer—whoever he may be—of his honours; and if stupid—I desire the responsibility of nobody's dulness but my own. You will excuse the trouble I give you, the imputation is of no great importance—and as long as it was confined to surmises and reports, I should have received it as I have received many others, in silence. But the formality of a public advertisement of a book I never wrote—and a residence where I never resided—is a little too much—particularly as I have no notion of the contents of the one—nor the incidents of the other. I have besides a personal dislike to "Vampires," and the little acquaintance I have with them would by no means induce me to divulge their secrets. You did me a much less injury by your paragraphs about my "devotion," and "abandonment of Society for the sake of religion" which appeared in your Messenger during last Lent; all of which are not founded on fact, but you see I do not contradict them because they are merely personal whereas the others in some degree concern the reader.

You will oblige me by complying with my request of contradiction—I assure you that I know nothing of the

[1] The true author of this book was Dr Polidori, Byron's travelling physician.

work or works in question—and have the honour to be (as the correspondents to Magazines say) "your constant reader" and very obedt. humble Servt. BYRON.

To the Editor of Galignani's
Messenger, &c., &c., &c.
Venice. *April 27th*, 1819.

Superscribed.
Monsieur
Monsieur Galignani,
18 Rue Vivienne,
Paris.

Parigi.

"Is it not interesting?" said the lady, when I had finished and laid the letter down.

"It certainly is so, but . . ."

"But what?"

"Is it the original letter?"

"You can see it is."

"It may be a wonderfully good facsimile."

"Oh, no. Look at the paper."

"Yes, the paper looks quite as it should do. But what I have noticed is something different."

"What?"

"The folds—creases."

"What have they to do with it?"

"Everything. The writer folded the original letter before he addressed it on the space he had left blank for the purpose."

"Yes, well?"

"But here the creases are not right. This quarto size piece of paper was never folded as its writer folded his letter."

"Then . . . ?"

"This is a facsimile. What do you want for it?"

"Well, I am asking twenty pounds."

"I am sorry. It is worth only a few shillings."

"A few shillings! Mr Garnett, this is sad news for me. I am very poor. Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, but if the letter had never been addressed, I should have taken it to be the original."

"Then you won't buy it?"

"Only as a facsimile. But perhaps you will show me something else, for you have another letter with you."

"I have another letter, do you say?"

"Yes, a letter from Shelley."

"But there it is, you have read it."

"What I have read is a letter from Byron."

The lady's face went the colour of ashes.

"And you have the letter from Shelley in your bag," I continued. "As you told Mr Binns you wish to sell it, show it to me."

"No, I would rather not."

"I understand. Now, my advice to you is to destroy the two facsimiles lest you be again tempted to believe them originals."

"Mr Garnett!"

"Shall we tear them up and then be friends, you and I?"

The lady gazed long at me and then burst into tears.

"Yes," she sobbed. "Tear them up or burn them. I am a liar."

She held out her open bag, which had a division in its centre, and I took from it a similar sized letter from Shelley,

which I soon recognised to be a facsimile, for the same reason as in the case of the Byron epistle. I gave it to her. Taking it, with a passionate gesture she threw it on the fire.

Then piteously she wrung her hands. "What must you think of me?" she sobbed.

"I think that, having done the right thing so quickly—I may say instinctively—you may now go forward like a brave lady."

"God bless you for that. Good night, Mr Garnett."

"Good night. When I in my turn shall be tempted, I will think of you and try to act as you have just done."

A heart-rending sob was my poor visitor's only answer as the front door closed behind her.

As for me, I tried to resume the use of my pen, but I confess that I used, instead, something made of linen. Why? Well, I felt morally convinced that within the walls of my study had just appeared the victim of a tragic history. Did I do wrong to let my door close on her, to let her go unaided? I believe so. Moreover, had I not offered her my friendship?

'The Elixir of Life.'

I was coming down the staircase of the paternal mansion in Regent's Park when I saw in the hall Sabina, our housemaid, conducting a man into my father's study. When the door was closed, "Who is that?" I asked her. "A gentleman to see your father, on very important business he says." "But papa will not be in until late." "Oh, I did not know, and as it is nearly seven o'clock, I told the gentleman to wait a little." "I will go and see him," I replied.

I went into the study. There, with his back turned to me, stood a tall man with his gaze apparently glued to one of the bookshelves. Depending from his right hand was a small black bag of singular shape.

"Good evening," said I. "I am sorry, but my father will not be home until very late to-night. Can I be of any use to you?"

While I spoke the stranger had turned, and I had looked into a most solemn countenance of which the most remarkable feature was a very long red nose. His age appeared to be about sixty.

"Dear me!" he said. "Now what a pity to be sure. My business is so very important."

"What business?"

"Well, I am not justified in telling you, the matter being a private one. But may I ask whether you are really Mr Richard Garnett's son?"

"Certainly. Yes, I am."

"In that case I wish just to say that it is of the greatest importance to your father to see me during the next twenty-four hours—not later on any account."

"There is no difficulty. You can do so to-morrow at this time."

"By seven o'clock—you are quite sure?"

"Yes, a little before seven o'clock."

"I will come punctually without fail."

"Can I give my father any message or your name?"

"Just repeat to him, please, these four words—'The Elixir of Life.'"

"'The Elixir of Life.' I will remember."

"Don't forget, on any account."

But somehow or other I did forget! And it so happened that Sabina also omitted to tell my father of the stranger's call.

The next evening, just before dinner-time, came a post-card. I read—

"British Museum.

I shall not be home to dinner. R. G."

That was my father's formula—when not returning to dine he invariably sent such a message to my mother, or, in her absence, to one of us children. Shortly before seven o'clock a knock sounded on the door. I went to it, and there stood the red-nosed man, bag in hand.

"Your father?" he asked.

"I am sorry. My father will not be in until late."

"Did you give him my message?"

"No, I forgot."

"Then . . it . . is . . too . . late," the man slowly said, with a sigh.

"Too late for what?"

"That I must not tell you."

"I do hope it does not matter."

The stranger laughed grimly.

"It matters more than you can imagine, but it cannot be helped. Does your father know that I called?"

"No, he doesn't."

"Then do not tell him on any account whatsoever, please."

But I did. The next morning I mentioned the stranger's two calls, and then gave his forgotten message, 'The Elixir of Life.'

My father's hand went to his forehead. Then he said, "'The Elixir of Life'! My dear boy, this *is* unfortunate. What an opportunity to have lost!"

My father died in the year 1906.

Yesterday afternoon, in Essex Street, Strand, I passed a man identical in every respect, his strange-looking bag included, with the man who called and saw me well over fifty years ago at my father's house. *He looked no older.* He, of course, did not recognise me, for I have not drunk of the Elixir of Life.

(*To be continued.*)

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